



DAWN Medical Examiner Reference Guide

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Contents

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
1.	INTRODUCTION.....	5
	1.1 Overview of DAWN	5
	1.2 How DAWN Works.....	6
	1.3 The DAWN ME/C Reporter.....	6
	1.4 Privacy Protections	7
	1.6 Assuring Confidentiality	7
	1.7 Truth in DAWN Reporting.....	8
	1.8 Westat and DAWN	8
	1.9 About the ME Reference Guide	8
2.	HOW TO IDENTIFY DAWN CASES	10
	2.1 Obtain a List of Deaths	10
	2.2 Review Decedents Records	10
	2.3 Determine if a Death is a DAWN Case.....	11
	2.3.1 DAWN Case Criteria	11
	2.3.2 Evidence in the Record	11
	2.3.3 Interpretation of Evidence in the Record	12
	2.3.4 Deaths <u>Not</u> Reportable to DAWN	12
3.	TRACKING RECORDS	15
	3.1 Tracking Records: An Example.....	15
	3.2 The Confidentiality of Tracking Lists.....	16
4.	GETTING STARTED.....	17
	4.1 How to Display eMERS.....	17
	4.2 How to Log In	18
	4.3 Timed Log Outs.....	19
	4.4 About the Screens	20
	4.5 A Note to State Medical Examiners Only	20
5.	THE MEDICAL EXAMINER CASE REPORT	22
	5.1 An Overview	22
	5.2 How to Enter a Case	22
	5.3 How to Use Check Boxes	23
	5.4 How to Use Radio Buttons	23
	5.5 How to Complete the Fields	23
	5.6 How to Submit the ME Case Report.....	36
	5.6.1 About Potential Errors Regarding Drug Entries	37
	5.6.2 About Potential Duplicate Case Entries	37
6.	HOW TO MODIFY OR DELETE AN INCOMPLETE CASE	43
	6.1 How to Modify a Case	44
	6.2 How to Delete a Case.....	45

7.	HOW TO VIEW CASE COUNTS.....	47
8.	HOW TO ENTER AND UPDATE THE ME ACTIVITY REPORT	48
8.1	How to Display the Activity Report	48
8.2	About the Activity Report Screen.....	48
8.3	How to Review Previously Recorded Activity for a Specific Month .	53
9.	HOW TO LOG OUT.....	55

Appendices

		<u>Page</u>
A:	COMMON ABBREVIATIONS	
B:	GLOSSARY OF DAWN TERMS	
C:	NON-PHARMACEUTICAL INHALANTS	
D:	LAPTOP USERS GUIDE	D-1
D1	Getting Started.....	D-1
D1.1	How to Display the DAWN Application	D-1
D2	How to Log In	D-4
D2.1	How to Log In	D-4
D2.2	Timed Log Outs.....	D-7
D2.3	About the Screens	D-7
D3	How to Transmit Data to Westat.	D-9
D4	Transmission Reports.....	D-17
D5	How to Log Out of the Application	D-18
D6	How to Shut Down	D-21
D6.1	Alternate Shutdown Procedures	D-22
LS	LAPTOP SUPPLEMENT	D25
	How to Scan for Viruses Using Command AntiVirus Software	D-26

TABLE OF FIGURES

		<u>Page</u>
4-1	THE EMERS LOG IN SCREEN	17
4-2	THE EMERS HOME PAGE	19
4-3	SELECT A FACILITY SCREEN.....	19
4-4	MENU IN THE LEFT-HAND CORNER OF EACH SCREEN	20
4-5	MEDICAL EXAMINER CASER REPORT (UPPER PORTION)	20
5-1	MENU IN THE CORNER OF THE EMERS SCREENS.....	22
5-2	CHECK BOXES	23
5-3	RADIO BUTTONS.....	23
5-4	DATE OF DEATH.....	24
5-5	SEX	24
5-6	AGE.....	24
5-7	ZIP CODE OF DECEDENT’S LAST RESIDENCE.....	24
5-8	PLACE OF DEATH.....	25
5-9	ZIP CODE FOR PLACE OF DEATH	25
5-10	RACE/ETHNICITY	25
5-11	MANNER OF DEATH	26
5-12	CAUSE OF DEATH	27
5-13	SUBSTANCE(S) INVOLVED.....	28
5-13A	RADIO BUTTONS FOR ALCOHOL INVOLVEMENT.....	28

5-13B	SUBSTANCE(S) INVOLVED SECTION (TOP)	29
5-13C	SUBSTANCE(S) INVOLVED SECTION (MIDDLE)	29
5-13D	SUBSTANCE(S) INVOLVED SECTION (BOTTOM) W/ <i>CODEINE</i> ENTERED IN THE <i>DRUG ENTRY</i> FIELD	30
5-13E	ARROW BUTTONS TO VIEW ADDITIONAL SELECTIONS	30
5-13F	SUBSTANCE(S) INVOLVED SECTION WITH <i>CODEINE SULFATE</i> SELECTED	31
5-13G	CLOSE UP OF BOX AND RADIO BUTTONS	31
5-13H	IF YOUR SUBSTANCE DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE LIST ABOVE	31
5-13I	POP-UP WHEN SUBSTANCE DOES NOT APPEAR ON THE LIST.....	31
5-13J	SAME DRUG ACCIDENTALLY SELECTED TWICE.....	32
5-13K	POP-UP SCREEN WITH STREET DRUG DESCRIPTION	35
5-14	FIELD 12: COMMENTS FIELD.....	36
5-15	FIELDS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SCREEN	36
5-16	SUBSTANCE(S) INVOLVED SECTION W/ <i>DRUG ENTRY</i> FIELD.....	37
5-17	<i>TYLENOL</i> SELECTED AS THE DRUG AND <i>ORAL</i> SELECTED AS THE ROUTE OF ADMINISTRATION.....	37
5-18	<i>ACETAMINOPHEN</i> SELECTED AS THE SECOND DRUG AND <i>ORAL</i> SELECTED AGAIN AS THE ROUTE OF ADMINISTRATION	38
5-19	SCREEN DESCRIBING POTENTIAL ERROR	38
5-20	NON-SPECIFIC DRUG.....	39
5-21	NON-SPECIFIC DRUG POSSIBLE PROBLEM SCREEN.....	39
5-22	SCROLL DOWN AND CLICK ON <i>SAVE CASE AS COMPLETE</i>	40
5-23	CAFFEINE (OR NICOTINE) RELEVANCE SCREEN	40
5-24A	POTENTIAL DUPLICATE SCREEN (TOP).....	41
5-24B	POTENTIAL DUPLICATE SCREEN W/POTENTIAL DUPLICATE CASE	41
5-24C	POTENTIAL DUPLICATE SCREEN (BOTTOM)	42
6-1	MENU IN THE CORNER OF EMERS	43
6-2	TABLE CONTAINING LIST OF INCOMPLETES	44
6-3	CLOSE-UP OF BUTTONS AT BOTTOM OF MEDICAL EXAMINER CASE REPORT SCREEN.....	45
6-4	TABLE CONTAINING LIST OF INCOMPLETE CASES	45
6-5	DELETE A MEDICAL EXAMINER CASE SCREEN.....	45
6-6	DELETE A MEDICAL EXAMINER CASE SCREEN (BOTTOM PORTION)	46
7-1	MENU IN THE CORNER OF EMERS	47
7-2	VIEW CASE COUNTS SCREEN	47
8-1	MENU IN THE CORNER OF EMERS	48
8-2	MEDICAL EXAMINER ACTIVITY REPORT	49
8-3	MEDICAL EXAMINER ACTIVITY REPORT W/ENTRIES FOR JANUARY	49
8-4	MEDICAL EXAMINER ACTIVITY REPORT (CLOSE UP OF BOTTOM)	50
8-5	POP-UP SCREEN WHEN DATA IS ENTERED FOR A MONTH 12 OR MORE MONTHS IN THE PAST.....	50
8-6	MEDICAL EXAMINER ACTIVITY REPORT W/UPDATED TOTALS	50
8-7	MEDICAL EXAMINER ACTIVITY REPORT CONFIRMATION SCREEN	51
8-8	NEWLY ENTERED TOTALS APPEARING IN RED.....	52
8-9	ADD DEATHS THAT OCCURRED IN FEBRUARY UNDER <i>FEBRUARY</i>	52
8-10	REPORTING HISTORY SCREEN	53
9-1	MENU IN THE CORNER OF EMERS	55
D1-1	THE OPENING SCREEN.....	D-1
D1-2	THE WELCOME SCREEN W/PASSWORD FIELD	D-2

D1-3	THE WELCOME SCREEN W/DAWN USER ICON.....	D-2
D1-4	ICON FOR DAWN APPLICATION.....	D-3
D1-5	A SAMPLE SCREEN AS THE DAWN APPLICATION LOADS	D-3
D1-6	LOAD CONTINUES SCREEN.....	D-4
D2-1	THE APPLICATION LOG IN SCREEN.....	D-4
D2-2	THE EMERS HOME PAGE	D-5
D2-3	SELECT A FACILITY SCREEN.....	D-6
D2-4	MENU IN THE LEFT-HAND CORNER OF EACH SCREEN	D-7
D2-5	THE DAWN HELP DESK CONTACT SCREEN	D-8
D3-1A	TOSHIBA-RIGHT SIDE OF LAPTOP	D-9
D3-1B	DELL INSPIRON- BACK OF LAPTOP	D-9
D3-2	CLICK ON <i>HOME</i> TO RETURN TO THE MAIN SCREEN	D-9
D3-3	MAIN SCREEN W/TRANSMIT LINK.....	D-10
D3-4	DIAL-UP CONNECTION SCREEN	D-10
D3-5	DIAL-UP CONNECTION SCREEN WITH DROP-DOWN LIST.....	D-11
D3-6	DIAL-UP CONNECTION SCREEN WITH MESSAGES	D-12
D3-7	AFARIA CLIENT WINDOW	D-12
D3-8	THE LAST LINE IN THE AFARIA CLIENT WINDOW	D-13
D3-9	NO DATA TRANSFER SCREEN	D-13
D3-10	THE SCREEN ICON	D-13
D3-11	THE STATUS SCREEN WITH THE <i>DISCONNECT</i> BUTTON	D-14
D3-12	ERROR MESSAGE	D-14
D3-13	IF THIS SCREEN IS DISPLAYED YOUR DATA WAS NOT	
	TRANSMITTED.....	D-14
D3-14	THE <i>BACK</i> BUTTON.....	D-15
D3-15	WEB PAGE UNAVAILABLE SCREEN	D-15
D3-16	ICON IN THE LOWER RIGHT OF THE SCREEN.....	D-15
D3-17	FILE MENU WITH CHECK MARK NEXT TO WORK OFFLINE.....	D-15
D4-1	THE MAIN SCREEN WITH THE LINK TO THE DATA FILES	D-16
D4-2	THE DATA FILES SCREEN.....	D-16
D4-3	THE MAIN SCREEN WITH THE LINK TO UPDATE CONFIRMATIONS	D-17
D4-4	UPDATE CONFIRMATIONS SCREEN.....	D-17
D5-1	MENU IN THE CORNER OF EMERS	D-18
D5-2	EXIT BUTTON	D-18
D5-3	CLOSING DATABASE SCREEN	D-19
D5-4	CLOSING DATABASE SCREEN WITH NO FILES TRANSFERRED	D-19
D5-5	THE FINAL SCREEN IN THE PROCESS	D-20
D6-1	TURN OFF YOUR COMPUTER.....	D-22
D6-2	DISK CLEANUP SCREEN 1.....	D-22
D6-3	DISK CLEANUP SCREEN 2.....	D-23
LS-1	COMMAND ANTIVIRUS MENU	L-1
LS-2	COMMAND ANTIVIRUS REPORT WINDOW	L-1
LS-3	COMMAND ANTIVIRUS REPORT WINDOW	L-2

TABLE OF TABLES

<u>Tables</u>		<u>Page</u>
3-1	SAMPLE TRACKING LIST.....	13
5-1	BENZODIZEPINES COMMONLY FOUND IN DAWN.....	34
5-2	OPIATES COMMONLY FOUND IN DAWN	35

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of DAWN

DAWN is a public health surveillance system that monitors national and local trends in drug-related emergency department visits and drug-related deaths investigated by medical examiners and coroners. DAWN tells us where new drug problems are emerging, how old drug problems are changing, where public health resources might be needed, and which drugs and drug combinations are associated with the most severe health consequences.

DAWN is the responsibility of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). SAMHSA is required to collect DAWN data by Section 505 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 290aa-4). SAMHSA has contracted with Westat, a private research firm in Rockville, Maryland, to operate the DAWN data collection system.

DAWN data are collected regularly from two primary sources within the U.S.: Emergency Departments (EDs) and medical examiners and coroners (ME/Cs).

Emergency Departments (EDs): DAWN collects data on drug-related ED visits from a scientific sample of hospitals. These hospitals are selected to represent all hospitals in 22 major metropolitan areas and in the U.S. as a whole. The sample includes large and small hospitals, urban as well as rural and suburban hospitals. **Only non-Federal, short-stay, general medical and surgical hospitals that operate 7-day/24-hour EDs are eligible to participate in DAWN.**

Medical Examiners and Coroners (ME/Cs): DAWN collects data on drug-related deaths reviewed by ME/Cs. DAWN does not use a statistical sample of ME/C jurisdictions (counties). Priority is given to jurisdictions within the metropolitan areas represented in the ED component of DAWN, but a number of ME/C jurisdictions outside of those metropolitan areas also participate. DAWN is interested in deaths reviewed by medical examiners, coroners, and other officials responsible for death investigations. Generally speaking, a medical examiner is a physician who practices forensic medicine. A coroner may be a physician or a lay person who, typically, is not trained in forensic medicine depending upon the jurisdiction. The type of official responsible for death investigations varies across jurisdictions. Some of these officials are appointed; some are elected. In the U.S., 22 states and the District of Columbia investigate deaths using state, district, or county medical examiners; 18 states use both medical examiners and coroners; and 11 states use only coroners. Death investigation jurisdictions are eligible for DAWN, regardless of the type of official involved.

Not all deaths are reviewed or investigated by ME/Cs, and the rules that specify which deaths are referred to ME/Cs also vary by state and jurisdiction. Typically, deaths that are attributed to natural disease processes are not referred to the ME/C; in those cases, the decedent's treating or attending physician completes the death certificate. However, deaths not due to a natural process – such as homicides, suicides, or accidents – or unattended deaths or deaths that occur under certain other circumstances (such as those involving an unidentified person) usually are investigated by the ME/C for the area in which the death occurred. This variability in the types of deaths investigated by ME/Cs affects

the cases that are available for consideration by DAWN, but in general, we believe that most deaths of interest to DAWN will be referred to ME/Cs in most jurisdictions.

Finally, the content of the death investigations may vary. Typically, the ME/C evaluates the medical history of the decedent, if known; performs an external physical examination; obtains body fluids for toxicologic testing; and investigates the circumstances of the death to determine cause and manner or death. Some cases also require a medicolegal autopsy (postmortem examination) to determine cause or manner of death. Other investigations to determine cause of death may involve fewer steps and processes.

1.2 How DAWN Works

Recognizing the importance of DAWN data to the community and the Nation, hundreds of ED and ME/C facilities participate in DAWN. Each participating facility is assigned a DAWN Reporter to collect data on the facility's behalf. Some facilities appoint a member of their own staff to report DAWN cases; other facilities work with Westat to appoint a Field Reporter (WFR).

The DAWN Reporter reviews decedent records, identifies DAWN cases, and abstracts demographic and substance use information. Decedents' families are **never** interviewed. For each DAWN case, the DAWN Reporter enters the information on the DAWN computer application, Electronic Medical Examiners Reporting System (eMERS) and submits the data electronically.

The DAWN Facility Liaisons (FLs), Westat's representatives in the field, visit participating facilities on a periodic basis. These visits are to coordinate DAWN activities with facility administration staff, train Reporters, evaluate data collection procedures, and solve reporting problems as needed.

The FLs and other Westat staff also conduct periodic field audits to verify that reporting criteria are fully understood and consistently used. **To be a true "warning network," DAWN must collect data in a timely manner and the reporting must be complete and consistent across all participating MEs.** To achieve these goals, Westat has developed quality control procedures associated with identifying, tracking, entering, and transmitting DAWN data.

1.3 The DAWN ME/C Reporter

As a DAWN ME/C Reporter, you are responsible for gathering and recording DAWN data and transmitting these data to Westat. You rely the on information in decedent records.

It is your responsibility to:

- **Review records** for each death reviewed by the ME/C and **identify DAWN cases** accurately and consistently, based on the information contained in the record.
- **Track ME/C records** reviewed and not yet reviewed.
- Enter information from the decedent record accurately and completely on the electronic DAWN **ME Case Report**.
- Complete and submit to Westat the **ME Activity Report** which documents the number of deaths reviewed and DAWN cases submitted for each month.

1.4 Privacy Protection

Once DAWN data are disclosed to SAMHSA, the data are protected under a different Federal law, Section 501(n) of the Public Health Service Act. Section 501(n) says that identifiable data can be used only for the purpose for which they are collected. **Furthermore, Title V of the e-Government Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-347) imposes stiff penalties—up to 5 years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000—for unlawful disclosures of information by SAMHSA and its sworn agents (e.g., contractors).** Since DAWN collects data for public health surveillance, identifiable data cannot be used for any other purpose. DAWN collects no direct identifiers, and indirect identifiers (such as age, sex, and race) are used only in aggregate statistics.

1.5 Standards and Ethics

Reporters, as well as all DAWN project staff, must follow a code of standards and ethics in performing work on DAWN. The code is set by DHHS. SAMHSA, as an agency of DHHS, and Westat, as the DAWN contractor for SAMHSA, must abide by these standards and insure that findings released are an accurate portrayal of the ME/C records reviewed. All DAWN staff agree to these standards when they sign confidentiality agreements and reporter agreements.

Key elements of the code of standards and ethics in DAWN include:

- Assuring confidentiality of information accessed in DAWN
- Accurately reporting on DAWN to insure that findings released are an accurate portrayal of the ME records reviewed.

1.6 Assuring Confidentiality

It is your duty as a DAWN Reporter to keep the promise of confidentiality of DAWN data. During the course of reporting for DAWN, you will be given access to sensitive decedent information for the purpose of identifying and reporting DAWN cases.

As a DAWN Reporter, you:

- **Do not** collect direct decedent identifiers (for example, decedent names, addresses, Social Security Numbers, etc.) and do not transmit such identifiers in any form to Westat.
- **Do not** reveal to unauthorized individuals the identity of any person, health care provider, or other organization represented in the confidential data.
- **Do not** disclose to unauthorized individuals any identification codes or passwords that Westat provided to you for reporting DAWN data.
- **Do not** remove decedent records from the ME/C's designated site for any purpose associated with DAWN data collection.
- **Do not** use the data collected for DAWN for any other purpose.
- **Do not** use decedent information in a manner or place that violates the administrative, technical, or physical security requirements of the ME/C facility.

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- **Do not** take home or send to Westat copies of ME logs or tracking lists.

When serving as a DAWN Reporter, remember:

- Inadvertent or casual disclosure of information violates the confidentiality protections just as seriously as deliberate disclosure.
- Once an individual's privacy has been violated, it cannot be undone.
- Nondisclosure applies to all forms of communication—spoken, written, and electronic.

1.7 Truth in DAWN Reporting

As a DAWN Reporter, you must:

- Perform work in a faithful, industrious and professional manner
- Perform “authentic” work, i.e., conduct work following DAWN protocol and procedures
- Understand that it is unethical and fraudulent to submit work that has not been collected as represented
- Recognize that any violation of the above may lead to further actions by Westat, including withholding of payments, dismissal, court action, and claims for monetary damages.

1.8 Westat and DAWN

In February 2002, Westat was awarded the DAWN Operations Contract (DOC) by SAMHSA. Under this contract, Westat is responsible for the DAWN data collection and for implementing the redesign of DAWN to convert it into an active surveillance system capable of capturing information and rapidly turning it back to users.

Westat is an employee-owned research corporation serving agencies of the U.S. Government, as well as businesses, foundations, and state and local governments. Westat's research, technical, and administrative staff of more than 1,500 is located at the company's headquarters in Rockville, Maryland, near Washington, DC. An additional 1,100 staff members are engaged in data collection and processing at Westat's survey processing facilities, at the Telephone Research Center facilities, and throughout nationwide field interviewing operations. Demonstrating technical and managerial excellence since 1961, Westat has emerged as one of the most respected contract research organizations in the U.S.

1.9 About the ME Reference Guide

This guide describes the functions and other features of the eMERS application. eMERS enables you to perform the following activities:

- Enter new cases;
- Modify or delete cases;
- View case counts; and

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- Enter and update activity reports.

This manual contains instructions on how to perform these activities. Appendix D at the back of the manual contains a Decision Tree that can facilitate data entry throughout the reporting process. The manual is organized as follows:

- Section 2 explains how to identify DAWN Cases.
- Section 3 explains how to track records and avoid duplicate entries.
- Section 4 explains how to log in and offers some general descriptions of the screens.
- Section 5 explains how to complete the Medical Examiner's Case Report.
- Section 6 explains how to modify or delete an incomplete case.
- Section 7 explains how to view case counts.
- Section 8 explains how to enter and update the Medical Examiner's Activity Report.
- Section 9 explains how to log out of the system.

In addition, the following Appendices containing reference materials, appear in the back of the manual:

- Appendix A contains some of the common abbreviations used in records.
- Appendix B contains a glossary of DAWN terms.
- Appendix C contains a list of non-pharmaceutical inhalants.
- Appendix D contains the Lap Top Users Guide

2. How to Identify DAWN Cases

The criteria for identifying DAWN cases are very simple and general. **A death is a DAWN case if the death was induced by or related to the decedent's ingestion or use of a drug.** This is based upon the documentation in the decedent's record.

The DAWN protocol for identifying DAWN cases requires the following steps:

Step 1: Obtain/develop a list of all deaths for the ME/C participating jurisdiction.

Step 2: Directly review the decedent records for each death on the list

Step 3: Identify DAWN cases

Step 4: Keep track of the records that have been reviewed and the records that still need to be reviewed.

This chapter provides the basic guideline for each of these four steps.

2.1 Obtain a List of Deaths

You need to generate a clean list for all deaths for each jurisdiction you report to DAWN. This list may be handwritten or computerized. Either develop a list for your purposes, or copy or print out an existing list. You will use this list to count the deaths for your jurisdiction each month and it will be the basis for the tracking list discussed in Chapter 3.

The log may have some minimal identifying information, such as decedent name or record number, necessary to locate the records or to look-up those records on a computerized system.

Ultimately, you need to compile a list of all deaths for each reporting jurisdiction.

Reminder: Since the list may contain decedent identifying information, you must store these lists in a secure location and keep them at least two months for quality assurance reviews.

2.2 Review Decedent Records

The DAWN protocol requires that all reporters use the "Direct Record Review" procedure to identify DAWN cases. Direct Record Review (DRR) refers to determining whether a death is a DAWN case, by reviewing the information in the decedent's record and applying the DAWN case criteria. It does not matter whether your jurisdiction uses paper or electronic records, as long as you review a record for each decedent on the log or census.

When the DAWN data collection is established in a new facility, the DAWN Facility Liaison works with ME/C Staff and the DAWN Reporter to design a system whereby records are available to DAWN Reporters in a timely manner. If you encounter any problems in accessing records work with your Facility Liaison to resolve them.

Reviewing a record for each decedent is important because each death is potentially a DAWN case. Short-cut methods to reduce the number of records reviewed have been proven to be unsatisfactory because they miss DAWN cases.

As a DAWN Reporter, your objective is to locate and review all available decedent records to determine which deaths are DAWN cases. Although, your goal is to review **every** record, in some instances that goal may not be immediately achievable, even with your best efforts and the involvement of your DAWN Facility Liaison. For this and other reasons, you **must enter** the information on the Activity Report (see Chapter 7, How to Complete the Medical Examiner Activity Report). Westat needs to know how many deaths (Total ME Deaths) and how many of the records you were able to obtain and actually review **every time** you report.

2.3 Determine if a Death is a DAWN Case

Determining if a death is a DAWN case requires you to understand:

- DAWN case criteria
- Evidence in the decedent record that can be use for identifying DAWN cases
- Interpretation of the evidence in the record
- Exceptions

2.3.1 DAWN Case Criteria

The DAWN Case Criteria states:

A death is a DAWN case if the death was induced by or related to the decedent's ingestion or use of a drug.

Most problems related to identifying DAWN cases will consist of questions about how to apply the DAWN case criteria to specific deaths. When you have any questions about how to apply the DAWN case criteria, call your DAWN Regional Monitor in the Westat Home Office at 1-800-FYI-DAWN.

2.3.2 Evidence in the Record

To identify a DAWN case, the DAWN Reporter must find and evaluate the evidence documented in the decedent's record. The DAWN case criteria require that the death be drug-induced or drug-related. **Drug use must be implicated in the decedent's death as the primary cause for the death (drug-induced) or as a factor that contributed to the death (drug-related).** The relationship between the drug use and the death must be supported by the evidence in the record, whether the drug-use is confirmed or presumed.

The evidence that the drug use is involved in the person's death may come from sources such as:

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- Death Certificate (usually contains Cause of Death and Manner of Death)
 - Toxicology lab report
 - Autopsy report
 - Documentation on External physical signs
 - Documentation on the Inspection of scene of death
 - Statement of physician/family/friends
 - Other information

If the death certificate or autopsy report implicates the drug use in the death, it is a DAWN case with few exceptions. For the other sources, the drug use should be noted in more than one source, this is especially important when the drug use is **not** noted on the Death Certificate. Do not make assumptions. It is important to remember that a death where **only** the toxicology report indicates recent drug use is not a DAWN case. A toxicology report can be used as supporting evidence only.

DAWN cases include the use, misuse and abuse of drugs. The key is whether the drug use is implicated and documented as a **cause** or **contributing factor to the death**.

2.3.3 Interpretation of Evidence in the Record

Different ME/Cs may use different terms to describe the sections and contents of their records. The terms used by DAWN – Death Certificate, Toxicology lab report, autopsy report, External physical signs, Inspection of scene of death, Statements – describe the types of categories of information. These categories may be found under other names in the records you review.

As a DAWN Reporter, one of your tasks is to become familiar with the terminology, content, and layout of the records for the information that you need to identify DAWN cases and extract DAWN data items. You need to review all the relevant sections of the record, even if the information is not conveniently consolidated in one place.

2.3.4 Deaths Not Reportable to DAWN

This section extends the basic DAWN criteria to specific situations, questions, and problems that may arise in the course of reviewing records to identify DAWN cases. There are eight basic reasons for a death not being a DAWN case. Explanations of each of these, with examples, are provided to help reporters understand particular circumstances that do not qualify as DAWN cases. For clarification, several of these also include examples of a similar death that actually is a DAWN case, with an explanation why one is and one is not a DAWN case.

Example #1

The decedent was a recent drug user, but died of natural causes – If the drug did not cause or contribute to the death, it is **not** a DAWN case. Examples would include a cocaine user who dies of cancer, a heroin user who dies from multiple sclerosis, or a marijuana user who dies of complications from diabetes.

Example #2

The decedent was a homicide victim who was on drugs at the time of his/her death – Whether the victim of the homicide was taking drugs is not the relevant issue. If the weapon in the homicide was a drug, the death is a DAWN case because the drug caused the death. Homicides by other means are not DAWN cases, even if the victim was using drugs that contributed to violent behavior. Examples would include a person on PCP who is killed in a shooting or a marijuana user who is stabbed in a fight.

Example #3

A non-pharmaceutical substance was consumed but not inhaled – The non-pharmaceutical substance (e.g., gasoline, toluene, paint, glue) was consumed or administered by some means other than inhalation, such as swallowing or injection. The rule for non-pharmaceuticals is simple. DAWN is interested in non-pharmaceuticals that are used as inhalants. Therefore, a non-pharmaceutical is reportable only if inhaled.

The decedent drank turpentine. This is **not** a DAWN case.

The decedent injected gasoline while high on PCP. This **is** a DAWN case, only because of the PCP; only the PCP is reportable.

Example #4

Only a history of drug abuse is documented – Such documentation may appear in the record as a notation indicating “history of drug abuse.” If documentation points only to a history of drug use/abuse and there is no evidence of recent use, it is **not** a DAWN case.

The record of a decedent who was HIV+ indicates a history of intravenous drug abuse (IVDA). This is not a DAWN case because of the HIV+ status or because of the intravenous drug abuse. To be a DAWN case, there must be evidence of **recent drug** use that caused or contributed to the death.

Example #5

Alcohol was the only substance involved and the decedent was age 21 or over – Deaths involving alcohol and no other substance are DAWN cases only if the decedent is not an adult (age less than 21). Alcohol is reportable in an adult DAWN case only when present in combination with another reportable substance.

Example #6

The only documentation of drug use is in toxicology test results – Documentation of drug use must be present in the record, on the death certificate, or autopsy. Toxicology may pick up recent medications taken for legitimate therapeutic purposes, drugs administered during life-saving treatment, or drugs taken some time ago and unrelated to the death. Therefore, toxicology alone is not sufficient evidence to make a death a DAWN case. For example:

- A man slipped on a wet concrete floor and fractured his hip. He subsequently died from a pulmonary embolus. The toxicology result is positive for opiates. There is no other evidence of opiate use in the record, death certificate or autopsy. This is **not** a DAWN case.
- An unidentified man is found unconscious and later dies. Toxicology is positive for benzodiazepines. The cause of death states “suicide, + benzos.” This **is** a DAWN case because “+ benzos” is included. This is evidence that the use of benzodiazepines is related to the person’s death.

Example #7

Drugs listed are not related to the death – There is no documentation in the record, death certificate, or autopsy to indicate that the death was related to the use of drugs. For example:

- A 24-year-old female passenger in a bus accident died from her injuries. She had been taking cocaine just before the bus was sideswiped by a tractor-trailer. There is no indication in the record that her cocaine use was connected to the injury. This is **not** a DAWN case.
- A young man presented with fever, headache, and symptoms of meningitis. He later dies. The record indicates that he used an albuterol inhaler and took oral steroids for asthma. These medications are not related to the person’s death. This is **not** a DAWN case.

Example #8

There is no evidence of drug use – The record, death certificate or autopsy does not refer to drug use. Examples may include:

Undermedication – Decedent who forgot to take, stopped taking, or took too little of a prescribed medication. For example, the decedent stopped taking medication to control high blood pressure, suffered a stroke, and died. The stroke is related to not taking the medication. This is **not** a DAWN case.

3. Tracking Records

The most dependable way to ensure that you have reviewed every record is to use a tracking system. DAWN Reporters must have a method to track which records have been reviewed and which records have yet to be reviewed.

- At a minimum your record tracking system should include a way to:
- Identify all deaths for your jurisdiction for each month (as described in Section 2.1).
- Record a link so you have a way of linking the death to the record, in the event the DAWN Home Office has questions about a specific DAWN case or there is a need to review that record again for other DAWN-related quality assurance activities.
- Track each record that you review, as well as those that still need to be reviewed.

The following guidelines will help you set up and use a tracking system to perform the other activities related to locating and reviewing records. These guidelines are general, and the specific method will be different in each ME/C Office. Your DAWN Facility Liaison will work closely with you to develop the best approach for your specific situation.

3.1 Tracking Records: An Example

Table 3-1 Sample Tracking List

Name	Date of Death	Rec #	Record Obtained	Record Reviewed	Notes
Joe Smith	11/01/2006	A20041130	X	MKS	
Cid Byrd	11/02/2006	A20041133	X	MKS	
Jane Jones	11/01/2006	A20041131	X	MKS	
Rose Roe	11/01/2006	A20041132	X	MKS	11/15/06 Tox test not returned yet. Entered incomplete.
Cid Byrd	11/02/2006	A20041133	X	MKS	DUP
Jim Wood	11/02/2006	A20041134	X	MKS <i>I</i>	<u>File incomplete</u> , need to review again later

Step 1: Mark off on the tracking list each record obtained and reviewed

After obtaining each record (paper or electronic), it is important to identify each record that you reviewed. You could identify the records obtained and reviewed via the columns shown in Figure 3-1 above, or you could mark each record off as reviewed by highlighting them and initialing them. Cross off any duplicate records and identify them as “DUP”. Review this list on a regular basis to identify those records that are still outstanding, and try to locate them. Except for records that are mislaid or required by

special circumstances to be kept out of circulation for an extended period, it is likely that the records that were initially unavailable will become available after a short time.

Step 2: Mark Cases Entered into eMERS but saved as Incomplete

Sometimes you will identify cases as DAWN Cases, or you will be fairly certain they are DAWN Cases, and these cases will be missing a few items of information from the record. For example, the Death Certificate has not been finalized, or you are still waiting for the toxicology report. Enter these cases into eMERS along with the available information, and save the cases as “Incomplete.” Be sure to mark them as “Entered Incomplete” to remind you to check the record again. When you have the additional information you need, enter it on the case form and save the case as “Complete.”

Step 3: Continue pursuing records that appear on the list but you have not yet reviewed.

Continue to use the tracking list to help you obtain and review all, or as many as possible, of the needed records. Identify with an “M” (missing) any records that you consider permanently lost. When each record on the list has been accounted for – obtained or determined to be permanently unavailable – and each record has been reviewed, you know that DAWN reporting for the deaths covered by the list has been completed.

3.2 The Confidentiality of Tracking Lists

Tracking lists may contain confidential information about individual decedents. Keep your tracking list in a secure locked place, preferably a locked cabinet or in a room that is kept locked when not occupied.

It is a breach of DAWN confidentiality protocol to remove records from the ME/C facility. The same is true for tracking lists. Do not remove the tracking lists from the ME/C facility; these lists may contain identifying information about decedents.

You will need to keep a copy of the tracking list for at least two months so that Westat staff can make use of it for quality assurance purposes. When the tracking list is no longer needed, you should shred your copies or turn them over to the appropriate ME/C facility manager, as required. Most facilities have security shredding.

4. Getting Started

The DAWN Electronic Medical Examiners Reporting System (eMERS) is an interactive web-based system providing Medical Examiners (MEs) with an automated means of capturing and reporting DAWN data. This guide describes the functions and other features of the eMERS application.

eMERS enables you to perform the following activities:

- Enter new cases;
- Modify or delete cases;
- View and print case lists; and
- Enter and update activity reports.

4.1 How to Display eMERS

The system can be displayed using any web browser, but this guide is written assuming you are using either Internet Explorer (IE) version 4.0 or higher, or Netscape Navigator version 4.0 or higher. Other browsers can be used to access eMERS, however, they may operate differently when using some eMERS functions. Please notify the DAWN Help Desk at 1-800-FYI – DAWN (1-800-394-3296), if you use a browser other than Internet Explorer or Netscape. You will then receive directions for entering “test” data to determine if your browser is compatible for use with eMERS.

To display eMERS, use the following procedure:

1. Type <https://entry.e-dawn.net/> into the Address (IE) or Location (Netscape) field.
2. Press the Enter key.

The eMERS Log In screen will then be displayed on your screen (see Figure 4-1).

DAWN DRUG ABUSE WARNING NETWORK

6 January 2006 01:13:15 PM

Please Log In

Please enter your User ID and Password for the DAWN eHERS/eMERS system.

User ID:

Password:

Login

? If you have a question or a problem with eHERS/eMERS, send an e-mail to dawnhelp@westat.com or call the DAWN Help Desk at 1-800-FYI-DAWN (1-800-394-3296).

Logout | Reference Guide | Contact Us | See Burden Statement

Control Number: #1
OMB No. 0930-0078 Expires 12/31/2008

Figure 4-1 The eMERS Log In Screen

Within your web browser, you can create a “Favorite” (IE) or “Bookmark” (Netscape) to facilitate access to the DAWN eMERS web site. After establishing the Favorite or Bookmark, you can then create a shortcut to access the site directly from your desktop.

4.2 How to Log In

Only authorized ME reporters may use eMERS. A user account tied to a unique User ID and password combination grants you access to view, add, modify and delete DAWN records. For additional security, the information transferred from your computer is encrypted so that it cannot be read, in the unlikely event it is intercepted by an electronic intruder.

You have been assigned a User ID and a personal password. **This information is confidential and should not be left on your desk or in any other public area.** You must type both of these into the Log In Screen to gain access to eMERS. When you type in the User ID during the Log In process, the text will appear in the appropriate field on the screen. For security purposes, the text of the *password* entry is *not* displayed. If you forget or misplace this information, call 1-800-FYI-DAWN (1-800-394-3296) for assistance.

To Log in to eMERS (see Figure 4-1):

1. Place the cursor in the User ID field with the mouse or by pressing the Tab key.
2. Type in your User ID.
3. Place the cursor in the Password field with the mouse, or by pressing the Tab key.
4. Type in your personal Password.
5. Click on the *LOGIN* button.

After logging in, you will automatically have access to the eMERS account of the ME for which you are responsible.

When you have completed the Log In process successfully, the **eMERS Home** page will be displayed (see Figure 4-2).

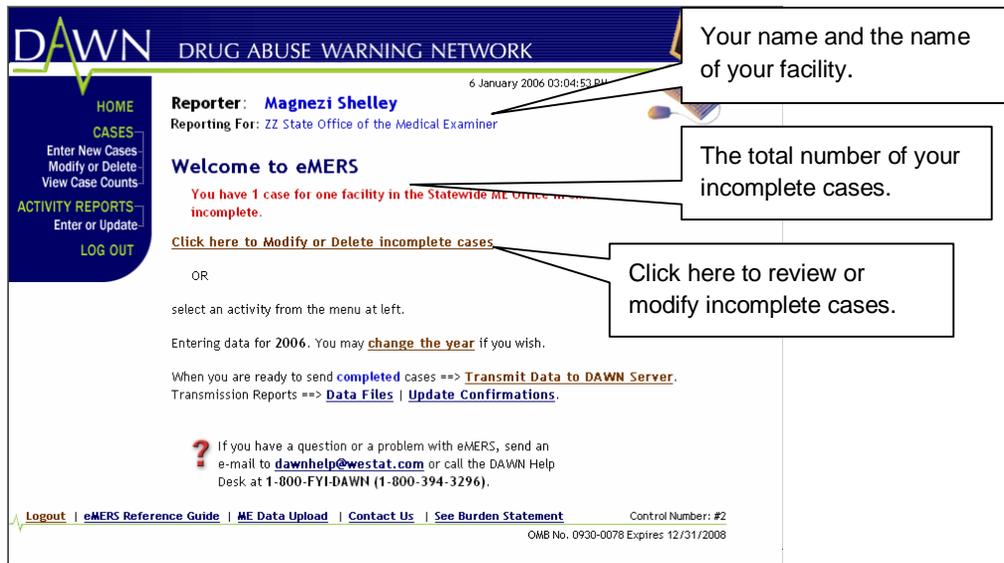


Figure 4-2 The eMERS Home Page

The current date, name of the Reporter (your name), and the Medical Examiner’s Office for which you are reporting are displayed at the top of the screen, along with the number of your incomplete cases, if any.

The number of *incomplete* cases is displayed because one of the primary purposes of eMERS is to remind you to complete case records. Incomplete cases are those that you still need to work on before submitting them. Displaying this number reminds you that you still have incomplete cases.

You may be assigned to report for more than one facility. If this is the case, after logging in, a screen will be displayed containing a drop-down list from which to select the specific facility for which you are reporting at that particular time (see Figure 4-3). To report cases for another facility, log out. Then, log in again, and select the new facility for which you wish to report.

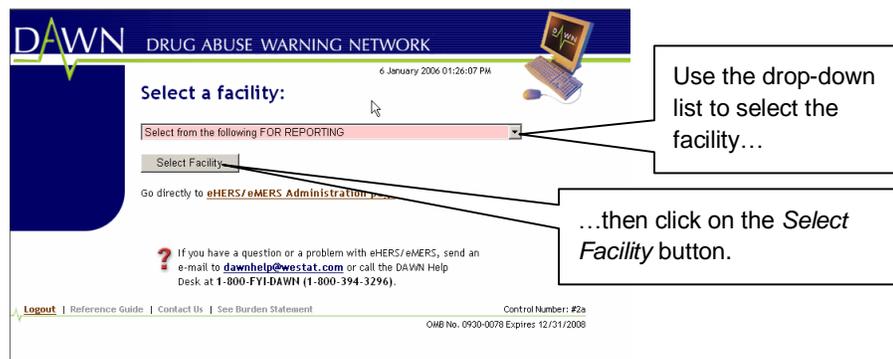


Figure 4-3 Select a Facility Screen

4.3 Timed Log Outs

For security reasons, always log off before you step away from your computer. If you leave eMERS displayed on your computer for more than an hour without performing any activity, the system

will automatically log you out and return you to the Log In screen. If you have not saved your work, it will be lost.

4.4 About the Screens

While different screens in eMERS contain distinct fields, there are some characteristics that are common throughout every screen in the application.

After you log in, a menu in the left-hand corner of every screen in the application enables you to perform each of the activities contained in eMERS (see Figure 4-4).

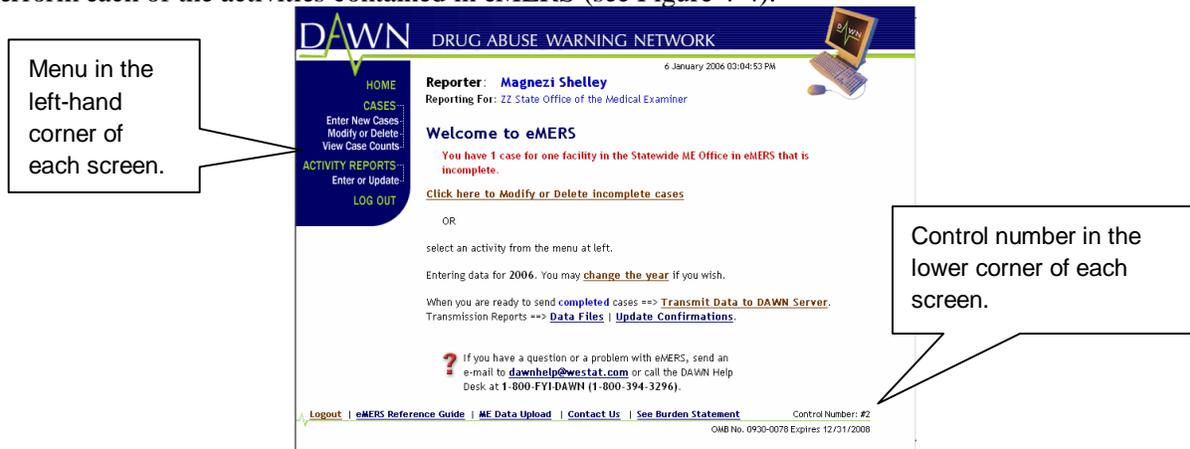


Figure 4-4 Menu in the Left-hand Corner of Each Screen

The lower right-hand corner of each screen contains a control number (see Figure 4-5). Should you need to call the DAWN Help Desk for assistance, refer to this number to identify the specific screen in which you are working.

4.5 A Note to State Medical Examiners Only

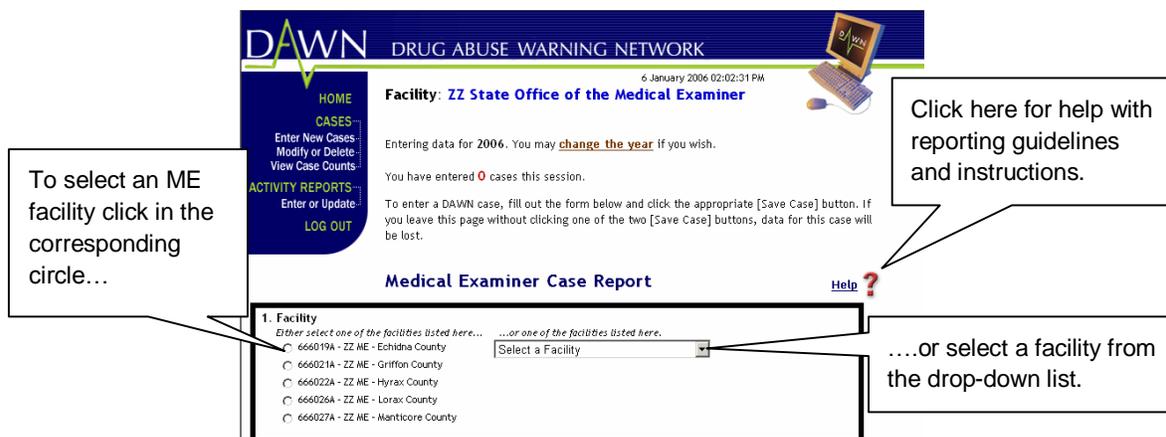


Figure 4-5 Medical Examiner Case Report (Upper Portion)

Prior to entering information, State Medical Examiners will be typically asked to select the county in which the ME facility resides for which the information pertains. For example, before entering information in a Case Report, State Medical Examiners will be asked to select the county to which the information corresponds.

To do this, click in the circle next to the county you wish to select, or select the facility from the drop-down list provided (see Figure 4-5). After you finish entering information, for example, in the Case Report Screen you may then select another facility without leaving the Case Report Screen. **Note that only State Medical Examiners will see this selection screen.**

5. The Medical Examiner Case Report

5.1 An Overview

The *DAWN ME Case* is the vehicle for capturing medical examiner/coroner (ME/C) DAWN data. The information collected on this form falls into four general categories:

- **Operations Data.** These data items, used in processing and tracking DAWN cases, include *Facility ID* and *Date of Death*.
- **Demographic Data.** These data items, used to investigate differences in drug use patterns across decedent demographic groups, include basic information such as *Sex*, *Age*, *Decedent's Last Residence ZIP Code*, and *Race/Ethnicity*.
- **Characteristics of the Case.** The information collected in *ZIP Code for Place of Death*, *Cause of Death*, and *Manner of Death* provides details on the circumstances of the death.
- **Substance(s) Data.** The data items reported under *Substance(s) Involved* constitute the core of the data reported to DAWN. These items include information about the specific drug(s) or substance(s) used, whether the substance was confirmed by a toxicology report, the route of administration of each reported substance, and whether alcohol was involved and confirmed by toxicology test.

5.2 How to Enter a Case

To enter a new case in the Medical Examiner Case Report, go to the menu in the corner of the screen, and under *Cases*, select *Enter New Cases* (see Figure 5-1).



Figure 5-1 Menu in the Corner of the eMERS Screens

There are three ways to enter information in the Medical Examiner Case Report, depending upon the type of field. For some fields, you enter information by clicking in the field and then typing the information. Other fields require you to use either *check boxes* or *radio buttons*.

5.3 How to Use Check Boxes

The fields containing *check boxes* allow you to **select all that apply**. When you click in a check box, a check mark appears (see Figure 5-2).



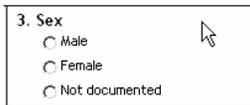
8. Race/Ethnicity
Select one or more:
 White
 Black or African American
 Hispanic or Latino
 Asian
 American Indian or Alaska Native
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 Not documented

Figure 5.2 Check Boxes

To erase a check mark, click in the box a second time.

5.4 How to Use Radio Buttons

The fields containing *radio buttons* allow you to select **only one option** from among those listed. When you click in a radio button to make a selection, a black dot appears (see Figure 5-3).



3. Sex
 Male
 Female
 Not documented

Figure 5-3 Radio Buttons

If you click and put a dot in one button and then click and put a dot in a second button, the dot in the first button will automatically disappear, and that choice will no longer be selected.

5.5 How to Complete the Fields

The Medical Examiner Case Report entry fields begin with the number 2 for *Date of Death*. Field 1 is the facility ID which appears automatically in eMERS. For help with reporting guidelines in completing the fields, click on the red question mark on the right of the screen.

The first field that requires entry is number 2, *Date of Death* (see Figure 5-4).

Figure 5-4 Date of Death

Date of Death - Enter the month, day and year of the death. Convert the month, spelled out in text, to numbers. Use two digits to enter the month, and two digits to enter the day, using a zero for the first digit in cases where the month is only a single digit. For example, for the month of July you would enter 07.

The year automatically defaults to the current year. If the actual date of death is unknown, use the date shown of the In some cases, you can override the default by selecting an earlier year from the drop-down list provided, in those instances where you are reporting cases from the previous year (see Figure 5-4).

Figure 5-5 Sex

Sex - Indicate the decedent's sex by selecting either the **Male** or **Female** radio button option, or, if the sex is unknown, select **Not documented** (see Figure 5-5).

Figure 5-6 Age

Age - Enter the decedent's age. If the age is less than a year, select the corresponding radio button or if the age is unknown, select the radio button, *Not documented*.

When age information is inconsistent in the decedent's record, determine the age by using the decedent's date of birth. Be careful when entering age; the system will accept any age under 120. For example if you mean to enter 19 years but enter 119 years by mistake, 119 will be accepted. Please verify the age before moving onto the next item.(see Figure 5-6).

Figure 5-7 Zip Code of Decedent's Last Residence

ZIP Code of Decedent's Last Residence – Enter the five-digit ZIP Code of the decedent's last residence. Or use the appropriate radio button to indicate if the decedent has no fixed address, was known to be in an institution such as a shelter, or lived outside the U.S. If the ZIP code is unknown, then select the radio button, *Not documented* (see Figure 5-7).

6. Place of Death
 Select one:
 Emergency department
 Other health care facility
 Decedent's home
 Public place
 Other
 Not documented

Figure 5-8 Place of Death

Place of Death – Use the appropriate radio button to indicate the decedent’s place of death. If the place of death is unknown, then select the radio button, *Not documented* (see Figure 5-8).

Record where the death occurred, as described in the record.

- If the death occurred in an emergency department of a hospital or other health care facility, enter *Emergency department*.
- If the death occurred in a hospital or other health care facility but not in the emergency department, enter *Other health care facility*.
- If the death occurred in the decedent’s residence, enter *Decedent’s home*.
- If the death occurred in a public place, such as in a store, on the street, or in a park, enter *Public place*.
- If the death occurred somewhere else, such as in a neighbor’s house or in the car, enter *Other*.

7. ZIP Code for Place of Death

 Not documented

Figure 5-9 Zip Code for Place of Death

ZIP Code for Place of Death - – Enter the five-digit ZIP Code of the decedent’s place of death. If the ZIP code is unknown, then select the radio button, *Not documented* (see Figure 5-9).

8. Race/Ethnicity
 Select one or more:
 White
 Black or African American
 Hispanic or Latino
 Asian
 American Indian or Alaska Native
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 Not documented

Figure 5-10 Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity - Race/Ethnicity - Indicate the patient’s racial origins by selecting **all** applicable checkbox options. Multiple categories may apply. For example, if race on the chart is “white” and ethnicity is “Hispanic,” check both *White* and *Hispanic or Latino*. If the patient’s race/ethnicity is not documented on the chart, or is not one of the categories shown, select *Not documented*. **However, if you select *Not documented*, you must not select any other options** (see Figure 5-10).

When coding Race/Ethnicity use the following definitions:

- *White* – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- *Black or African American* – A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as “Haitian” or “Negro” can be used in addition to “Black” or “African American.”
- *Hispanic or Latino* – A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term “Spanish origin” can be used in addition to “Hispanic” or “Latino.”
- *Asian* – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- *American Indian or Alaska Native* – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and South America (including Central America) and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander* – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

9. Manner of Death
Select the manner of death assigned by the medical examiner:

- Suicide
- Homicide
- Natural
- Accident
- Could not be determined

Figure 5-11 Manner of Death

Manner of Death - This item characterizes the death by whether it was inflicted by the decedent (suicide), inflicted by another person (homicide by drugs), or was the result of a physical reaction to a substance consumed. (see Figure 5-11).

Select the manner of death based as recorded on the death certificate. We use the categories that are on the standard U.S. Death Certificate which are Natural, Accident, Suicide, Homicide, and Could not be determined.

For suicides and homicides please keep the following in mind:

- *Suicide* – This category include cases where the death was ruled a suicide. A suicide that involves hanging, wrist slashing, shooting, jumping, etc. is included **if drugs were involved and documented as a contributing factor**.

-
- *Homicide* – DAWN is only interested in homicides where drugs are weapons. This category, defined as the taking of another individual’s life using drug(s), is used only when the **drug was a direct cause of death**.

Homicide by drugs includes death where the decedent was given a drug or other substance to hasten his or her death.

Homicide by a means other than drugs **are not** reportable to DAWN. For example, homicide by shooting or stabbing is not a DAWN case, even if the victim was using drugs that contributed to violent behavior.

10. Cause of Death *List the chain of events causing the death. Do not abbreviate. Do not use ICD codes.*

(Part I) Immediate cause:
[Text input field with cursor and dropdown arrow]

As a result of:
[Text input field with dropdown arrow]

As a result of:
[Text input field with dropdown arrow]

As a result of:
[Text input field with dropdown arrow]

(Part II) Other significant conditions:
[Text input field with dropdown arrow]

Figure 5-12 Cause of Death

Cause of Death - Type in a **detailed** description of each cause contributing to the death. When possible, copy verbatim from the decedent’s record (for example, from the death certificate, post mortem, or autopsy report) however be sure to include as many specifics from the record as possible. (see Figure 5-12).

It should never be missing from a completed record. Do not use abbreviations or ICD-10 Codes.

11. Substance(s) Involved *Using available documentation, list all substances that caused or contributed to the death. Record substances as specifically as possible (i.e. brand [trade] name preferred over generic name preferred over chemical name, etc.). Do not record the same substance by two different names. Do not record current medications unrelated to the death.*

Alcohol involved? Yes No / Not documented

1

2

3

4

5

6

Route of Administration
Select one:

Mark if confirmed by toxicology test

Oral	Injected	Inhaled	Inhalant, sniffed, snorted	Smoked	Other	Not documented
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[Clear line](#) [Clear line](#) [Clear line](#) [Clear line](#) [Clear line](#) [Clear line](#)

[? Colors](#) [Previous 17 Substances](#) [Next 17 Substances](#)

Drug Entry: [If your substance does not appear in the list above, click here to record your substance as entered.](#)

12. Comments
Enter here any questions or issues you have about this case. Do not include information that could identify the decedent.

Figure 5-13 Substance(s) Involved

How to indicate alcohol involvement:

Indicate whether alcohol was involved by selecting the appropriate radio button (see Figure 5-13a).

Alcohol involved? Yes No / Not documented

Figure 5-13a Radio Buttons for Alcohol Involvement

If alcohol was involved, indicate whether this has been confirmed by toxicology, and indicate the route of administration. To view the remaining fields, scroll to the bottom of the screen.

Substance(s) Involved - Indicate the drugs involved in the visit (see Figure 5-13). You may enter up to twelve drugs. If you enter more than six drugs, use the scroll to view any additional drugs (see Figure 5-13b).

The drugs displayed in the list always appear in strict alphabetical order. This list appears in the same way regardless of whether you capitalize the first letter of the drug name (see Figure 5-13d).

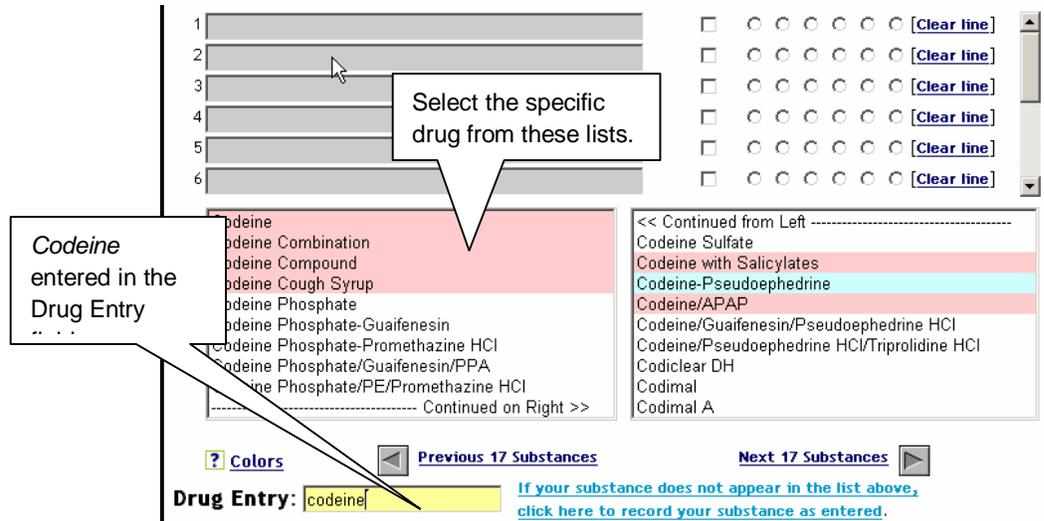


Figure 5-13d Substance(s) Involved Section w/*codeine* Entered in the *Drug Entry* Field

Select the specific drug by clicking on it in the list provided. If necessary, use the arrow buttons under the boxes to display additional selections (see Figure 5-13e).

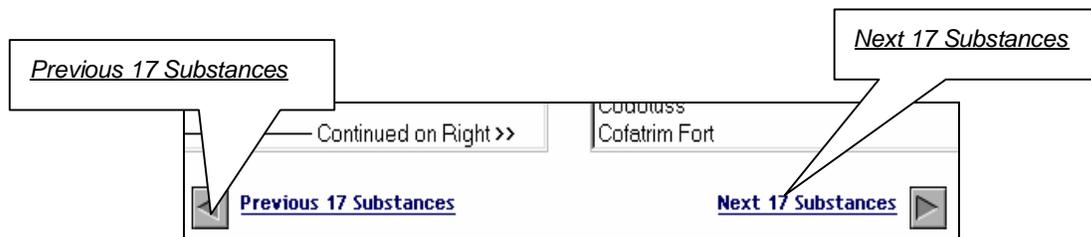


Figure 5-13e Arrow Buttons to View Additional Selections

Since the list is in alphabetical order, the buttons enable you to move backwards or forwards alphabetically.

Once you have selected the specific drug involved from the list provided, this first drug will appear in the field in line 1 of the Substance(s) Involved Section.

For example, if you type *codeine* in the *Drug Entry* field, and then select Codeine Sulfate from the list, Codeine Sulfate will automatically appear in the gray field in line 1 of the Substance(s) Involved Section (see Figure 5-13f).

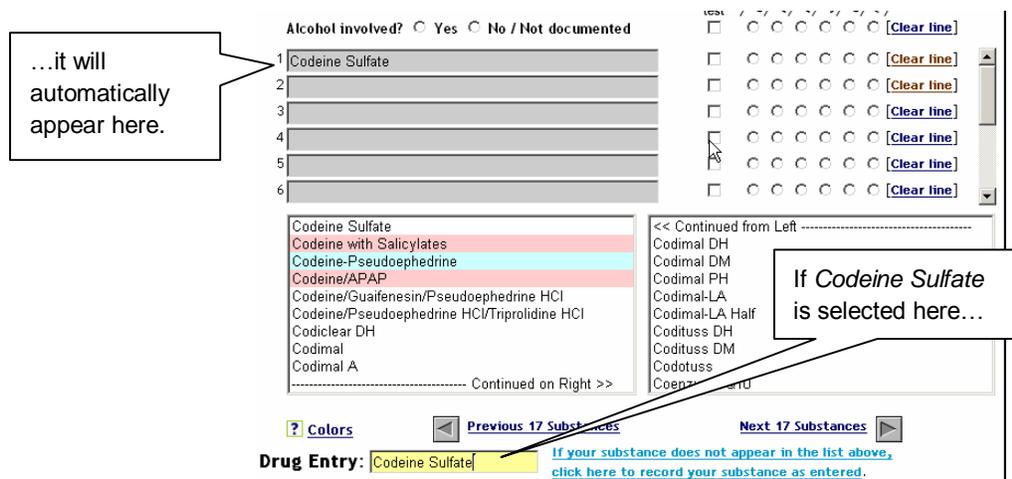


Figure 5-13f Substance(s) Involved Section w/CODEINE SULFATE Selected

Once the drug appears in the gray box in line 1 of the Substance(s) Involved Screen, click in the “confirmed by toxicology test,” if the substance has been confirmed by toxicology. If the substance **has not** been confirmed by toxicology, leave this field blank. **Note that brand names cannot be confirmed by toxicology.**

Next, click on the radio button corresponding to the route of administration of the substance, for example, *Oral*, *Injected*, etc. (see Figure 5-13g).

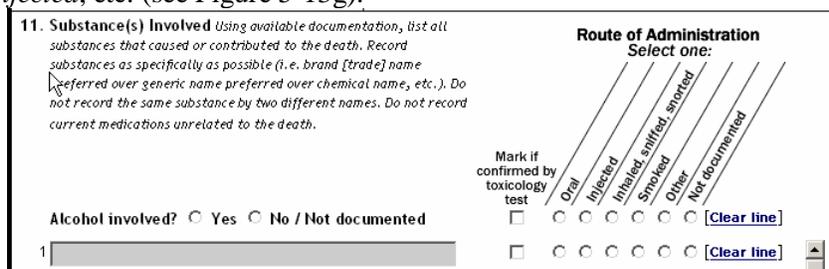


Figure 5-13g Close-up of Box and Radio Buttons

If the drug does not appear in the list, first check the spelling of the drug you entered. If you have spelled the drug correctly and you have used the arrow buttons to review the whole list and your entry does not appear, click on the blue line that reads, *if your drug does not appear in the list above, click here to record your substance as entered* (see Figure 5-13h).

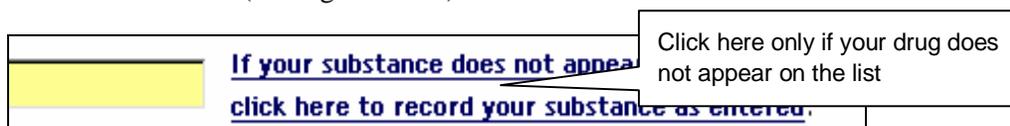


Figure 5-13h If your drug does not appear in the list above...

When you do this, a pop-up window will appear, enabling you to enter any information you might have about this substance (see Figure 5-13i). Enter any additional information in the field provided, then click on the button titled, *Record the Description*.

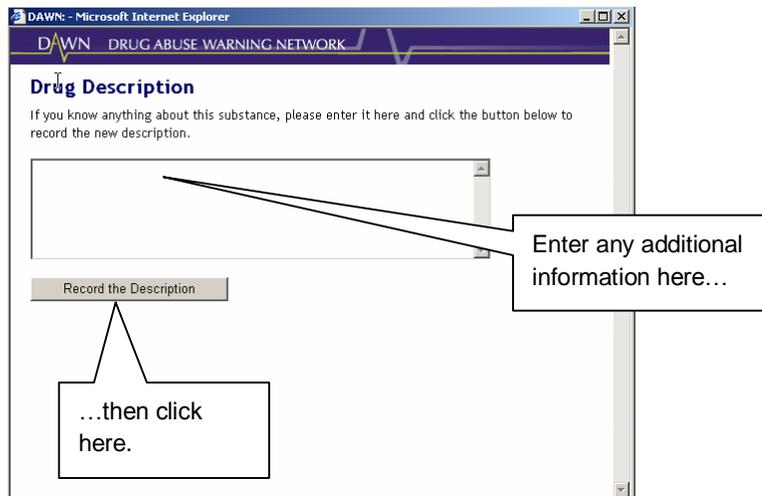


Figure 5-13i Pop-up When Drug Does Not Appear on the List

Since the list of drugs is very extensive, you should be certain that you have read the record and typed the drug name correctly before choosing this option.

When you click on a drug name to select it from the list of drugs, be sure to click only once on the selection. If you click twice on a selection, your selection will erroneously appear in the gray boxes on two lines, and the same drug will mistakenly be reported twice. Should this happen, click on the words *Clear Line* that appear at the end of the line in which the second selection appears (see Figure 5-13j).



Figure 5-13j Same Drug Accidentally Selected Twice

Note that the above does not apply in cases where the same drug was administered by more than one method (for example *Injected and Inhaled, sniffed, snorted*).

In case where the same drug has been administered by more than one method, the drug must be entered as many times as the ways in which it was administered. For example, if the drug was administered in two different ways, it must be entered twice.

A word about inhalants:

If you select an **inhalant** from the list, **the Route of Administration will automatically be set to *Inhaled, sniffed, snorted*.**

If you change the route to something else, the following message will appear:

You have specified a substance that is listed as 'Inhalant Only' but have selected a route other than 'Inhaled, sniffed, snorted'.

If the route should be 'Inhaled, sniffed, snorted', click the [OK] button.

If you wish to remove this substance from the list, click the [Cancel] button.

To be reported to DAWN, a **non-pharmaceutical inhalant** must have been *inhaled, sniffed, or snorted*. A non-pharmaceutical inhalant must also have psychoactive properties (i.e., affect the brain like a drug) when inhaled. Do not report inhalation of non-volatile gases, such as carbon monoxide.

Pharmaceutical inhalants, such as **anesthetic gases**, are reportable to DAWN. Anesthetic gases include gases such as nitrous oxide.

A **non-pharmaceutical** substance may be reportable to DAWN if it was **inhaled, snorted or sniffed**.

Is it listed in eMERS? If YES, it is reportable to DAWN.

EXAMPLES

Adhesives:	Model airplane glue, household glue, rubber cement.
Aerosols:	Spray paint, hairspray, air freshener, deodorant, fabric protector (Scotchguard).
Solvents:	Nail polish remover, paint thinner, correction fluid and thinner, toxic markers, pure toluene, cigar lighter fluid, gasoline, carburetor cleaner, octane booster.
Cleaning agents:	Dry cleaning fluid, spot remover, degreaser.
Food products:	Aerosol vegetable cooking spray, aerosol dessert topping (such as whipped cream, whippets).
Volatile gases:	Butane, propane, helium.
Nitrites:	Amyl nitrite, butyl nitrite, “poppers,” “snappers,” “rush,” “locker room,” “bolt,” “climax,” video head cleaner.
Freons:	Freons of any type.

EXCEPTION: Carbon monoxide, although a gas, is NOT reportable to DAWN.

A word about cocaine and its metabolites:

Cocaine and /or its metabolites frequently appear in toxicology results. If cocaine and/or its metabolites are present on a toxicology test and are implicated in the death directly or indirectly, the just enter “cocaine” once in Item 11.

The following cocaine metabolites are equal to cocaine for submission to DAWN (these are from actual DAWN data submissions):

- Benzoylcegonine
- Ecgonine Methylester
- Cocaine Metabolite
- Norocaine
- Methylecgonine
- Cinnamoylcocaine

- Ethylecgonine
- Anhydroecgonine Methylester

A word about benzodiazepines (benzos, BZD):

The terms *Benzodiazepines*, *benzos*, and *BZD* frequently appear in toxicology results. All refer to the class of drugs known as *benzodiazepines*. To report drugs as specifically as possible, look in other parts of the record for a more specific drug name.

- **Good:** Report benzodiazepines or benzos, if a generic or brand name is not documented in the record. Select confirmed by toxicology, if the toxicology was positive for benzodiazepines.
- **Better:** Report the generic name, if documented in the record and no brand name is documented. Do not select confirmed by toxicology if the test was only positive for the class, benzos.
- **Best:** Report the brand name, if documented in the record. Brand names are not confirmed by toxicology.

The following are examples of benzodiazepines commonly found in DAWN Cases:

Table 5-1 – Benzodiazepines commonly found in DAWN

Generic name	Brand name	Generic name	Brand name
alprazolam	Xanax	flunitrazepam	Rohypnol
	Xanax XR	flurazepam	Dalmane
	Xanbar	lorazepam	Ativan
bromazepam	Lexomil	midazolam	Versed
chlordiazepoxide	Librium	oxazepam	Serax
clonazepam	Klonopin	temazepam	Restoril
diazepam	Valium	triazolam	Halcion

A word about opiates:

Opiates frequently appear in toxicology results. Opiates or *opioids* are a class of pain relievers. To report drugs as specifically as possible, look in other parts of the record for a more specific drug name.

- **Good:** Report opiates, if a generic or brand name is not documented in the record. Select confirmed by toxicology, if the toxicology was positive for opiates.
- **Better:** Report the generic name, if documented in the record and no brand name is documented. Do not select confirmed by toxicology if the test was only positive for the class, opiates.
- **Best:** Report the brand name, if documented in the record. Brand names are not confirmed by toxicology.

The following are examples of opiates commonly found in DAWN cases:

Table 5.2 – Opiates commonly found in DAWN

Generic name	Brand name
Heroin	
Codeine acetaminophen-codeine	Tylenol with codeine
	Tylenol #3
	Tylenol #4
hydrocodone acetaminophen-hydrocodone	Hydrocet
	Lorcet
	Lortab
	Vicodin
hydrocodone-ibuprofen	Vicoprofen
hydromorphone	Dilaudid
Morphine	Avinza
	Kadian
	MSContin
	Oramorph SR

A word about street names:

If the record refers to a drug by a street name (for example, *Horse*), a pop-up screen will appear (see Figure 5-13k) containing a standard description of the drug bearing that street name (for example, for the street name *Horse*, a standard description might be *Heroin*).

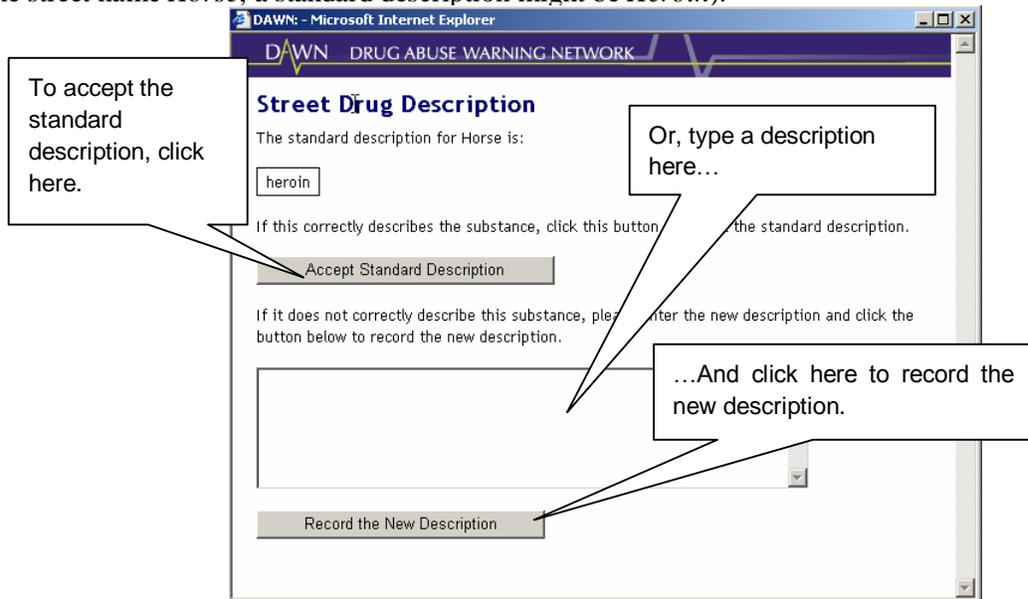


Figure 5-13k Pop-Up Screen with Street Drug Description

You can accept the standard description by clicking on the button titled, *Accept Standard Description*. Or, if the street term has a different meaning in your locale, you may type a description for the street name in the box provided, and then click on the button titled, *Record the New Description*.

After completing all of the fields on line 1 for the first substance involved in the DAWN case, repeat this process for any additional substances that were involved. You may enter up to six substances.

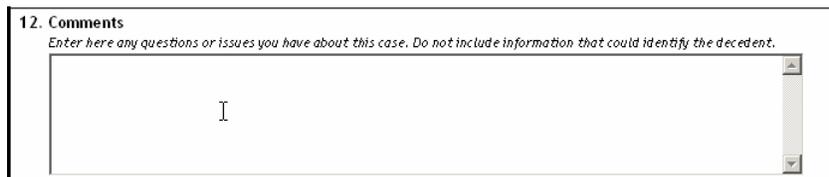


Figure 5-14 Field 12: Comments Field

Comments – Type in any additional comments you may have in the field provided (see Figure 5-14). Please provide any information that explains why this is a DAWN case. This is important helpful when it is not obvious from the information entered in *Cause of Death*.

5.6 How to Submit the ME Case Report

To submit the report, scroll down to the bottom of the screen.

If you will not need to edit this record later, click on the button titled *Save Case as COMPLETE*. You cannot save a case as *COMPLETE* until you have provided data for all the fields.

If you know that you will need to edit the record later, click on the button titled, *Save Case as INCOMPLETE*. (see Figure 5-15).

You may want to leave a case as *incomplete* for various reasons. It may be that some information may be missing from the record and you want to see if you can get the missing information from other sources in the medical examiner’s office. Or, you may have complete information, but may want to confer with someone else to ensure you are interpreting a note correctly, or reading the handwriting in the record correctly.

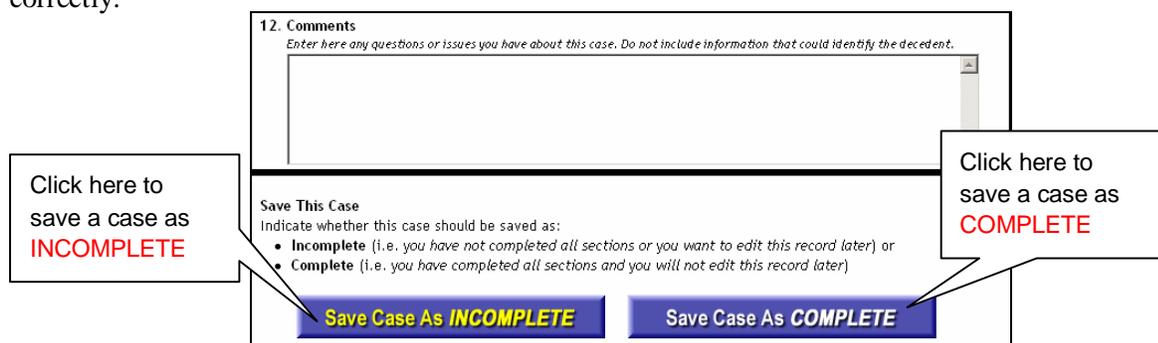


Figure 5-15 Fields at the Bottom of the Screen

Once you select *Save Case as Complete* and log off the system, you will not be able to delete it.

5.6.1 About Potential Errors Regarding Drug Entries

After you have selected *Save Case as Complete* there are only a few instances in which you may make changes. One instance pertains to entering the same substance twice under different names. This might occur in the set of fields titled, *Substances Involved*, specifically in the field titled *Drug Entry* (see Figure 5-16).

11. Substance(s) Involved Using available documentation, list all substances that caused or contributed to the death. Record substances as specifically as possible (i.e. brand [trade] name preferred over generic name preferred over chemical name, etc.). Do not record the same substance by two different names. Do not record current medications unrelated to the death.

Alcohol involved? Yes No / Not documented

Route of Administration Select one:

Mark if confirmed by toxicology test

	Oral	Injected	Inhaled, sniffed, snorered	Smoked	Other	Not documented
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Drug Entry:

[Colors](#) [Previous 17 Substances](#) [Next 17 Substances](#)

If your substance does not appear in the list above, click here to record your substance as entered.

Figure 5-16 Substance(s) Involved Section w/Drug Entry Field

For example, suppose you type *Tylenol* in the Drug Entry field, and indicate that it was administered orally, by clicking in the circle under the word, *Oral* (see Figure 5-17).

Alcohol involved? Yes No / Not documented

Route of Administration Select one:

Mark if confirmed by toxicology test

	Oral	Injected	Inhaled, sniffed, snorered	Smoked	Other	Not documented
1 Tylenol	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Drug Entry:

[Colors](#) [Previous 17 Substances](#) [Next 17 Substances](#)

If your substance does not appear in the list above, click here to record your substance as entered.

Figure 5-17 Tylenol Selected as the Drug and Oral Selected as the Route of Administration

Then, suppose you return to the Drug Entry field and type, *acetaminophen* (the same drug contained in Tylenol), and again select *Oral* as the Route of Administration (see Figure 5-18).

Alcohol involved? Yes No / Not documented

	toxicology test	Oral	Inhaled	Injected	Smoked	Other	Not documented
1 Tylenol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
2 Acetaminophen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ACE Inhibitor
Acetabutool Hydrochloride
Ace-Immune
Aceon
Acephen
Acerola
Acerola C
Aceta
Aceta-Gesic

<< Continued from Left -----
Acetadote
Acetamin/Dichloralphenazone/Isometheptene
Acetaminophen
Acetaminophen Child
Acetaminophen Jr
Acetaminophen Metabolite
Acetaminophen PM
Acetaminophen Quickmelt
Acetaminophen with Codeine

Drug Entry: If your substance does not appear in the list above, click here to record your substance as entered.

Figure 5-18 Acetaminophen Selected as the Second Drug and Oral Selected Again as the Route of Administration

Because the two drugs in our example are the same, and **because they were both administered in the same way**, the system will display a screen like the one in Figure 5-19, explaining that this may be a possible duplication and enabling you to delete one of the entries by clicking on a link.

Modify or Delete
View Case Counts
ACTIVITY REPORTS
Enter or Update
LOG OUT

There is a possible problem with one of the substances you entered for this case.

1. **Possible Duplicate:**
Tylenol is a type of acetaminophen. If these have been entered as the same substance, [click here to remove acetaminophen.](#)

Click here to delete one of the entries

1. Substance(s) Involved Using available documentation, list all substances that caused or contributed to the death. Record substances as specifically as possible (i.e. brand [trade] name preferred over generic name preferred over chemical name, etc.). Do not record the same substance by two different names. Do not record current medications unrelated to the death.

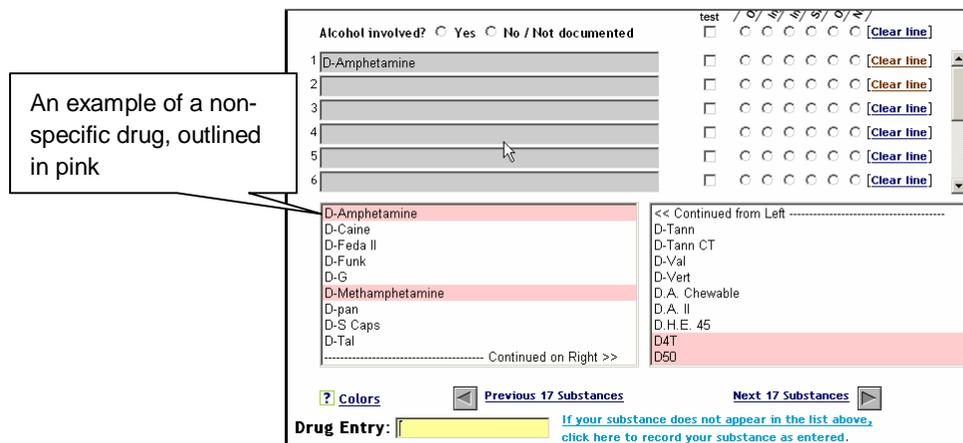
Alcohol involved? Yes No / Not documented

	toxicology test	Oral	Inhaled	Injected	Smoked	Other	Not documented
1 Tylenol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
2 Acetaminophen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>				
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 5-19 Screen Describing Potential Error

Delete the entry if appropriate and then scroll down and click on the button titled, *Save Case as Complete*.

Another instance in which you may make changes to the case record after you have selected *Save Case as Complete* pertains to selecting a non-specific drug in the *Drug Entry* field. Non-specific drugs appear outlined in pink in the drug lists (see Figure 5-20).



An example of a non-specific drug, outlined in pink

Figure 5-20 Non-specific Drug

Should you select a non-specific drug and click on *Save Case As Complete*, a screen will be displayed, similar to the one in Figure 5-21, alerting you to a possible problem and enabling you to display a list of drugs similar to the non-specific drug you have selected, from which you may, if you choose, select a more specific drug.

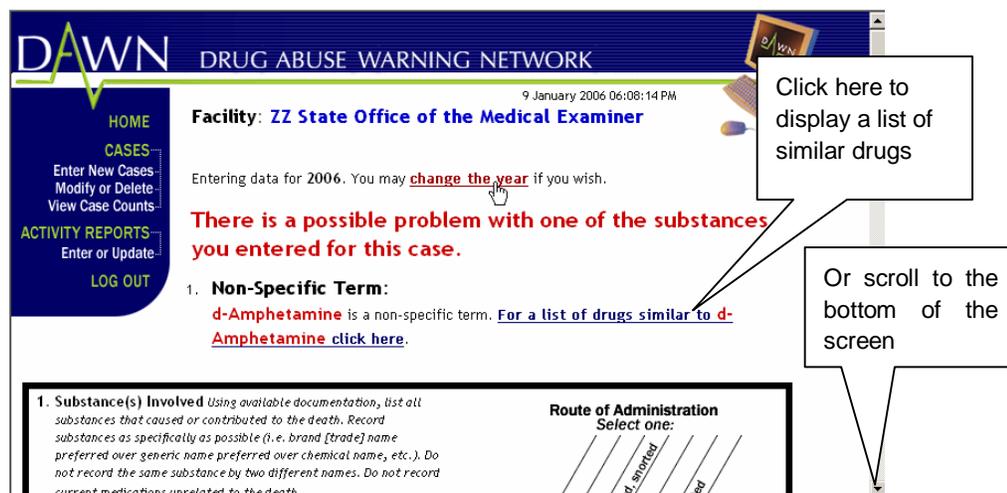


Figure 5-21 Non-specific Drug Possible Problem Screen

Or, if you do not wish to choose a more specific drug, simply scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click again on *Save Case As Complete* (see Figure 5-22).

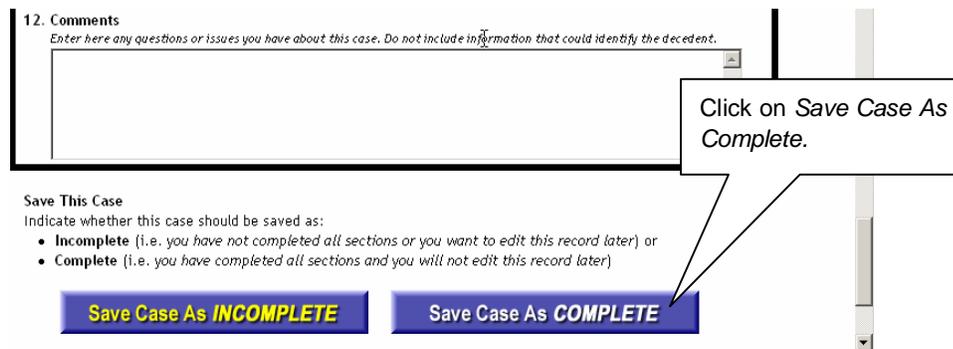


Figure 5-22 Scroll down and Click on *Save Case As Complete*

Yet another instance in which you may make changes to the case record after you have selected *Save Case as Complete* pertains to selecting either caffeine or nicotine in instances where these substances didn't contribute to the case.

For example, someone who overdosed on Heroin, may have had a cup of coffee beforehand, but the resulting caffeine didn't contribute to the suffocation from the overdose.

In instances in which caffeine or nicotine have been selected, a screen will be displayed similar to the one in Figure 5-23, explaining that this may be a possible problem and enabling you to delete the pertinent entry by clicking on a link.

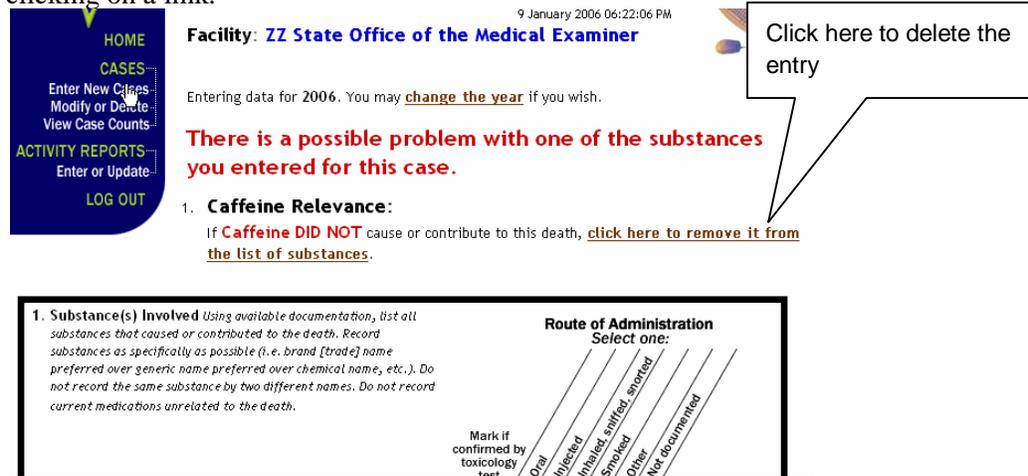


Figure 5-23 Caffeine (or Nicotine) Relevance Screen

Delete the entry if appropriate and then scroll down and click on the button titled, *Save Case as Complete*.

5.6.2 About Potential Duplicate Case Entries

It sometimes happens that the same case is entered twice by mistake. If you enter a case that closely matches a previously entered case, a screen will be displayed, containing a summary of the case just entered and a summary of previously entered cases that closely resemble the recently entered case (see Figure 5-24a).

DAWN DRUG ABUSE WARNING NETWORK
16 January 2006 03:47:01 PM
Facility: ZZ State Office of the Medical Examiner

Potential Duplicate
The case report you just entered has 1 (one) potential duplicate case report.

First, here is the case you just entered.

1a. Facility ZZ ME - Griffon County (666021A)			
1b. Case ID 791439			
2. Date of Death 01/05/2006	3. Sex Female	4. Age 80	
5. ZIP Code of Decedent's Last Residence No fixed address (homeless)	6. Place of Death Emergency department	7. ZIP Code for Place of Death Not documented	8. Race/Ethnicity Not Documented

Figure 5-24a Potential Duplicate Screen (Top)

Scroll down to view the potential duplicates (see Figure 5-24b).

Now we list the 1 potential duplicate case report which was previously saved.
Please review the case data presented and click on one of the buttons below.

Potential Duplicate

1a. Facility ZZ ME - Griffon County (666021A)			
1b. Case ID 791439			
2. Date of Death 01/05/2006	3. Sex Female	4. Age 80	
5. ZIP Code of Decedent's Last Residence No fixed address (homeless)	6. Place of Death Emergency department	7. ZIP Code for Place of Death Not documented	8. Race/Ethnicity Documented
9. Manner of Death	10. Cause of Death (Part I) Immediate cause: Drug overdose		
11. Substance(s) Involved			
Drug #	Drug Name	Tox Test	Route of Admin
1 42502	Percocet 7.5/325	No	Oral
200029	Alcohol	Yes	Oral
12. Comment			

Figure 5-24b Potential Duplicate Screen w/Potential Duplicate Case

After you have reviewed the potential duplicate case or cases:

- If you determine that the newly entered case is a duplicate and you wish to delete it, click on the button titled, Duplicate: Delete New Case (see Figure 5-24c). This will return you to a blank Medical Examiner Case Report screen, where you may then enter a new case.
- If the case is not a duplicate, and you wish to keep it, click on the button titled, Not a Duplicate: Keep New Case (see Figure 5-24c). This will return you to a blank Medical Examiner Case Report screen, where you may then enter a new case.
- If the case is not a duplicate, but you wish to go back and edit it, click on the button titled, Not a Duplicate: Edit New Case (see Figure 5-24c). Unlike the first two options, this will return you to the case that you have entered in the Medical Examiner Case Report screen, where you may then edit the case.

Now we list the 1 potential duplicate case report which was previously saved.
Please review the case data presented and click on one of the buttons below.

Potential Duplicate

1a. Facility <i>ZZ ME - Griffon County (666021A)</i>				
1b. Case ID <i>791438</i>				
2. Date of Death <i>01/05/2006</i>		3. Sex <i>Female</i>		4. Age <i>80</i>
5. ZIP Code of Decedent's Last Residence <i>No fixed address (homeless)</i>		6. Place of Death <i>Emergency department</i>	7. ZIP Code for Place of Death <i>Not documented</i>	8. Race/Ethnicity <i>Not Documented</i>
9. Manner of Death		10. Cause of Death <i>(Part I) Immediate cause: Drug overdose</i>		
11. Substance(s) Involved				
	Drug #	Drug Name	Tox Test	Route of Admin
1	42502	Percocet 7.5/325	No	Oral
	200029	Alcohol	Yes	Oral
12. Comment				

Should The New Case be Kept?

- Duplicate: Delete New Case** Select this if the new case displayed above IS a duplicate of the case report listed below it. The new case will be deleted.
- Not a Duplicate: Keep New Case** Select this if the new case displayed above is NOT a duplicate of the case report listed below it and you want to save this case report.
- Not a Duplicate: Edit New Case** Select this if the new case displayed above is NOT a duplicate of the case report listed below it but you would like to edit the record before saving it (i.e. you found a typo).

 If you have a question or a problem with eMERS, send an e-mail to dawnhelp@westat.com or call the DAWN Help Desk at 1-800-FYI-DAWN (1-800-394-3296).

Figure 5-24c Potential Duplicate Screen (Bottom)

6. How to Modify or Delete an Incomplete Case

To modify or delete an incomplete case, select *Modify or Delete* from the menu in the corner of the screen (see Figure 6-1).

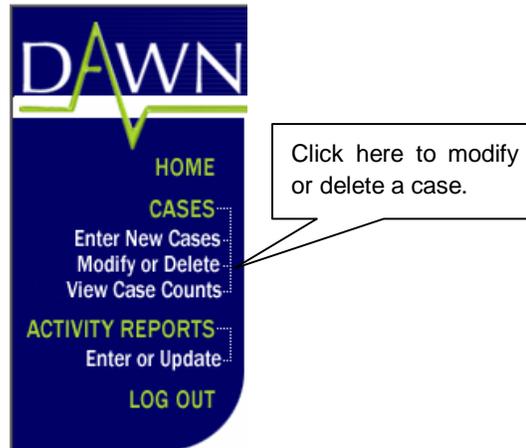


Figure 6-1 Menu in the Corner of eMERS

This will display a table containing a list of cases (see Figure 6-2).

The table includes the following columns:

- *Case ID* – This ID enables the DAWN Help Desk to identify a specific case. It is assigned automatically by eMERS.
- *Status* – The status of a case is either Incomplete, meaning there are additions or changes yet to be made, or Complete, meaning there are no more additions or changes to be made.
- *Case Entered On* – The date on which the case was first entered into the system. All dates are Eastern Time, meaning that if a case was entered after midnight Eastern Time, the date will reflect the following day, regardless of the Time Zone in which the case was entered (for example, if a case was entered in California at 11:05 P.M. on January 22, the date in the table would be January 23, since 11:05 P.M. in California, is 2:05 A.M. of the following day, Eastern Time.).
- *Date of Death* – The date of death. In this case, the date reflects the actual date of the death, as recorded in the ME and entered in eMERS.
- *Age* – The age of the decedent.
- *Sex* – The sex of the decedent.

If the decedent's age or sex has not yet been entered in an incomplete case, the item will be left blank.

Cases are displayed sorted by the date of death, with the oldest case appearing first. To reverse the order in which the cases appear, click on the column head, *Date of Death*.

Click on any of the other column heads to sort the list in ascending order by that specific item (for example, to sort the list in ascending order by the age of the decedent, click on the column head, *Age*). Click a second time on the column head to sort the list in **descending** order.

If the list extends below the screen, click and grab the scroll bar on the right-hand side to view the rest of the list (see Figure 6-2).

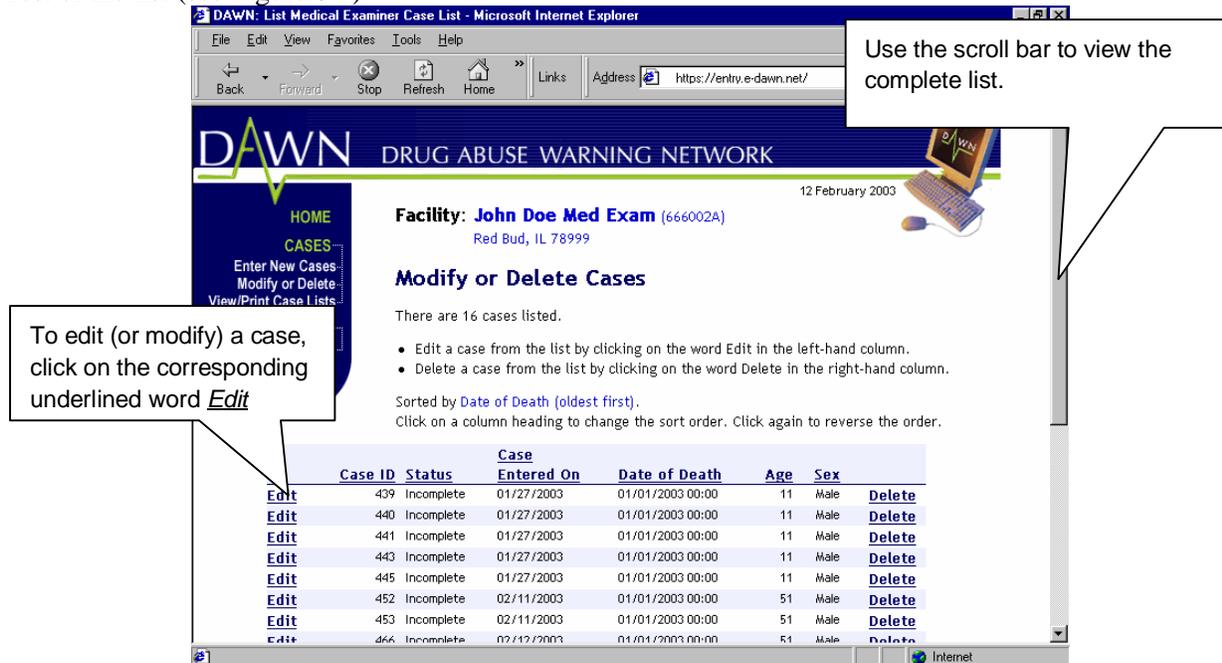


Figure 6-2 Table Containing List of Incomplete Cases

6.1 How to Modify a Case

To edit (or modify) a case, click on the corresponding underlined word, *Edit* (see Figure 6-2). This will display the Medical Examiner Case Report that is currently saved in eMERS. Click and grab the scroll bar on the right-hand side to view the additional fields that extend below the screen.

Modify or edit the Medical Examiner Case Report by clicking in the field containing the information you wish to add or change (For instructions on how to enter information in the fields of a Case Report, see the section, titled, *The Medical Examiner Case Report*). After you have finished making the modifications to the Medical Examiner Case Report, follow the same procedures as when you first entered the case record.

If you know that you will not need to edit this record later, save your changes by clicking on the button at the bottom of the screen titled, *Save Case as COMPLETE* (see Figure 6-3).

If you know that you will need to edit the record later, scroll down to the bottom of the screen and save your changes by clicking on the button at the bottom of the screen titled, *Save Case as INCOMPLETE* (see Figure 6-3).

Once you select *Save Case as COMPLETE* and log off the system, you will not be able to make any changes to the case record and you will not be able to delete it.

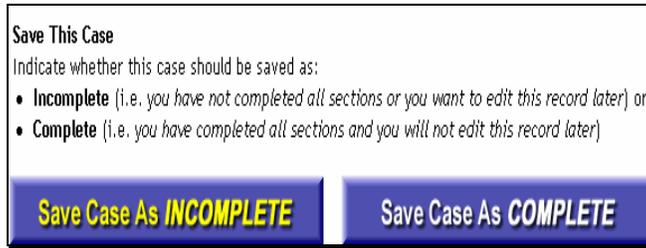


Figure 6-3 Close-up of Buttons at the Bottom of the Medical Examiner Case Report Screen

6.2 How to Delete a Case

To delete a case:

1. From the table of incomplete cases, click on the underlined word, Delete in the row corresponding to the case you wish to delete (see Figure 6-4).

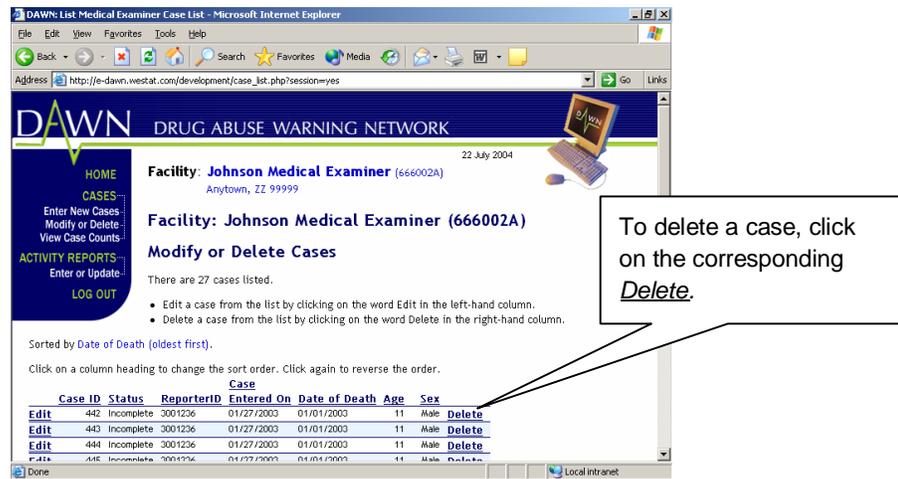


Figure 6-4 Table Containing List of Incomplete Cases

This will display the Delete a Medical Examiner Case screen (see Figure 6-5).

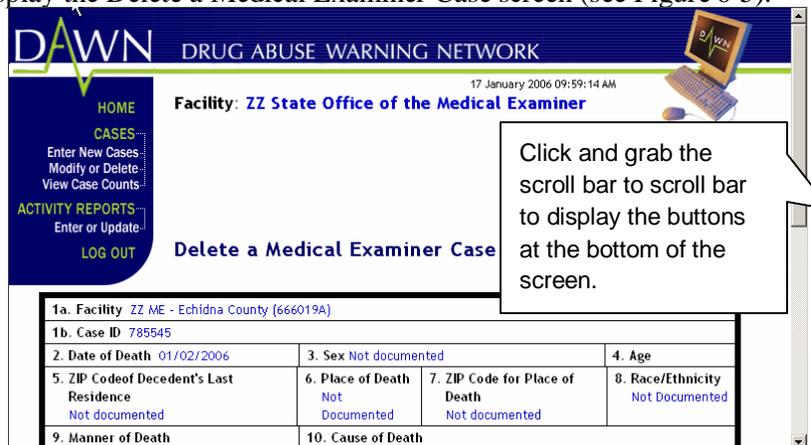


Figure 6-5 Delete a Medical Examiner Case Screen

Review this case record to make sure it is the one you want to delete.

To delete this case, scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click on the button titled, *Delete This Case* (see Figure 6-6).

If you decide you do not want to delete this case record, scroll to the bottom of the screen and click on the button titled, *Do NOT Delete This Case* (see Figure 6-6).

Clicking on either button returns you to the list of cases.

11. Substance(s) Involved	
Drug #	Drug Name
1 200609	Heroin
2 4939	Caffeine
Alcohol Not Involved	

12. Comment

Click here to delete a case.

Do **NOT** Delete This Case Delete This Case

? If you have a question or a problem with eMERS, send an e-mail to dawnhelp@westat.com or call the DAWN Help Desk at 1-800-FYI-DAWN (1-800-394-3296).

[Logout](#) | [eMERS Reference Guide](#) | [HE Data Upload](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [See Burden Statement](#) Control Number: #8
OMB No. 0930-0078 Expires 12/31/2008

Figure 6-6 Delete a Medical Examiner Case Screen (Bottom Portion)

7. How to View Case Counts

To view the number of cases, select View Case Counts from the menu in the corner of the screen (see Figure 7-1).

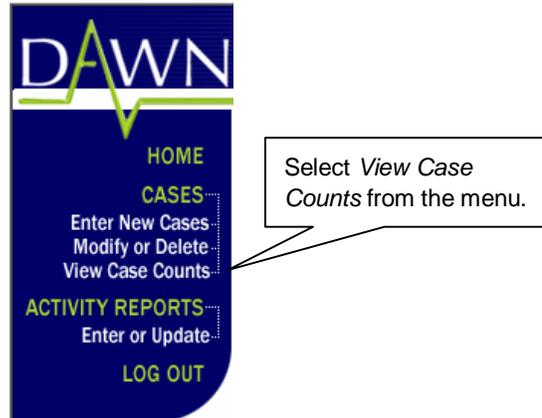


Figure 7-1 Menu in the Corner of eMERS

This will display a screen containing Case Counts the number of complete and incomplete cases and the month and year in which they entered (see Figure 7-2).

10 January 2006 02:20:12 PM
 Facility: ZZ State Office of the Medical Examiner

All Facilities

Completed Case Lists No Longer Available
 Effective immediately, lists of completed cases are no longer available on eMERS. Any months with incomplete cases are shown as links. Click on those links to see listings of incomplete cases for those months.

Complete and Incomplete Cases Entered by Month/Year
 Below are listed the months and years since January 2005 showing the number of Case Reports entered On and For each period.

List Cases Entered During		List Cases With a Death Date During	
Month/Year	Complete/Incomplete	Month/Year	Complete/Incomplete
Today	0 / 0		
01 / 2005	0 / 0	01 / 2005	0 / 0
02 / 2005	0 / 0	02 / 2005	0 / 0

Figure 7-2 View Case Counts Screen

8. How to Enter and Update the Medical Examiner Activity Report

The Medical Examiner Activity Report contains a month-by-month summary of the previously reported number of ME deaths, the previously reported number of records directly reviewed and entry fields where you can add to these previously reported numbers or make the first entries of those numbers for new months. There is also a field where you can make pertinent comments about each number you enter. These comments can help you and the Westat data processing staff understand those entries.

The following section describes how to record the required information in the Medical Examiner Activity Report.

8.1 How to Display the Activity Report

To display the Activity Report, from the menu in the corner of the screen, under *ACTIVITY REPORTS*, select *Enter or Update* (see Figure 8-1).



Figure 8-1 Menu in the Corner of eMERS

This will display the Medical Examiner Activity Report.

8.2 About the Activity Report Screen

For each month, the Medical Examiner Activity Report contains the total number of previously reported ME deaths, the total number of records that you have directly reviewed and a field for comments, all pertaining to the reporting for a given month. (see Figure 8-2).

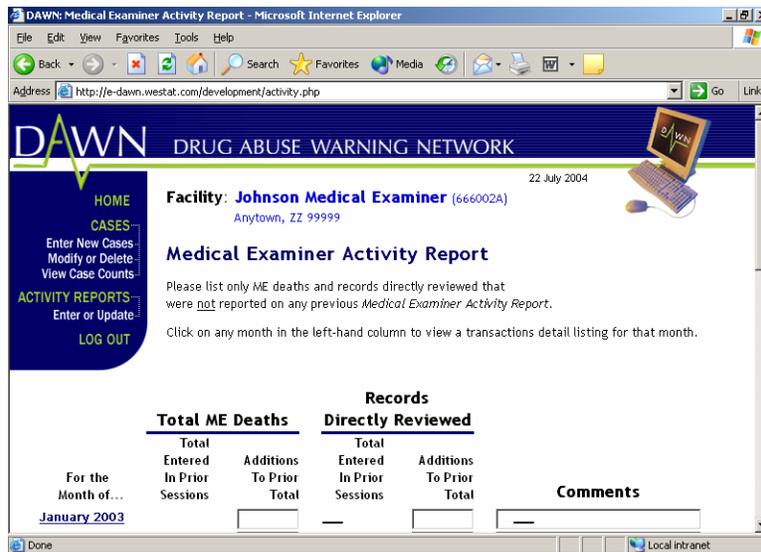


Figure 8-2 Medical Examiner Activity Report

As you receive the information, type in the current total number of ME deaths that occurred in that month on the line corresponding to that month. Then type in the number of records you have directly reviewed, again, on the line corresponding to the month in which the deaths covered by those records occurred. Then type in any comments you might have concerning these totals. If you have zero (0) deaths and zero records to review for a month, enter the zeros in the appropriate boxes and include the comment, “These are true zeros.” **Without the comment, eMERS won’t save the zeros.**

The Medical Examiner Activity Report displayed in Figure 8-2 has no entries for the month of January.

Figure 8-3 shows 153 Total ME deaths typed in under the column heading, *Additions to Prior Total* and 150 Records Directly Reviewed, also, under a column heading that reads, *Additions to the Prior Total*. Since no entries had been made for the month of January, the “prior total” in this case is “zero,” which is displayed in this screen as “-.”

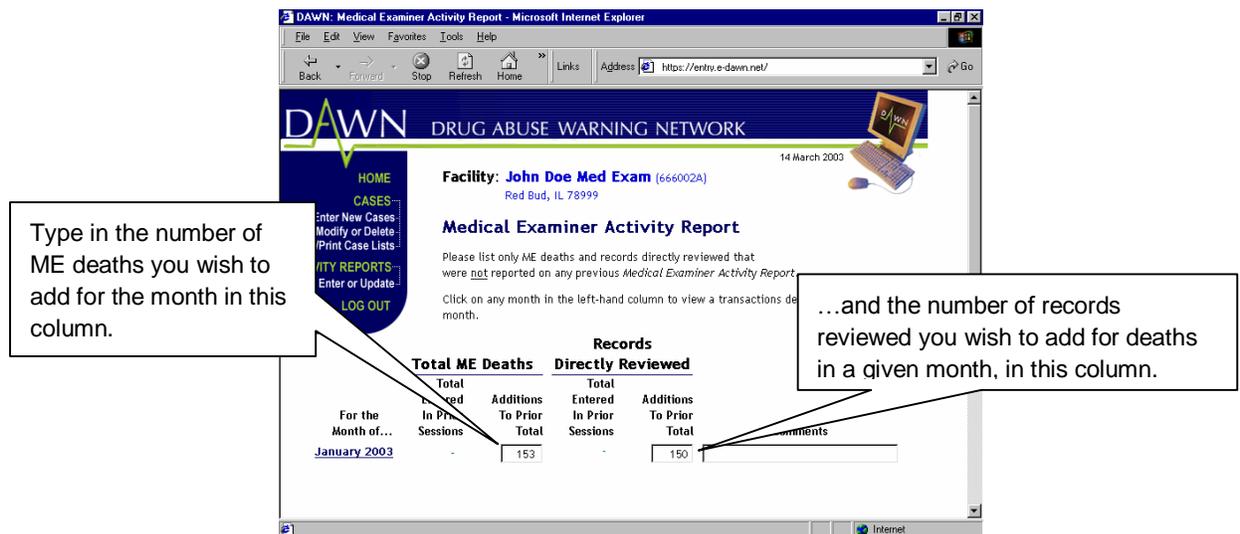


Figure 8-3 Medical Examiner Activity Report w/Entries for January

After you type in the number of deaths that occurred for that month and the number of records that you reviewed for that month, to save your entries, scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click in the box next to the words, “By clicking this box and clicking on the “Save Activity Report” button below, I certify that the above numbers are correct.” Then, click on the button titled, *Save Activity Report* (see Figure 8-4) **If you enter numbers but do not save your work, the numbers you entered will not be included in the cumulative totals.**

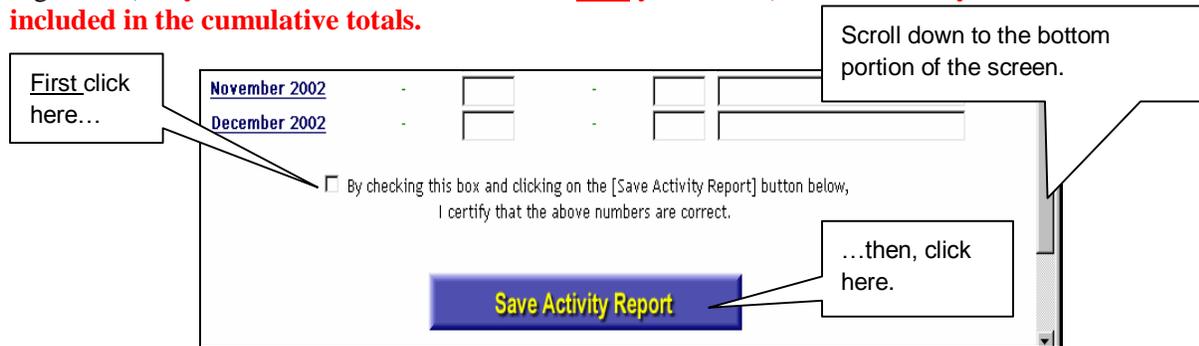


Figure 8-4 Medical Examiner Activity Report (Close-up of Bottom)

Note that if you enter data for a month 12 or more months in the past, you will receive a pop-up screen alerting you to check the date (see Figure 8-5).



Figure 8-5 Pop-up Screen When Data is Entered for a Month 12 or More Months in the Past

This helps to ensure that you have not accidentally entered current data in a field corresponding to an older date. It will not prevent you from entering older data, but simply draws your attention to the fact that you have entered data in a field that corresponds to a month and year at least 12 months in the past.

In the second week of February, you discovered that there were 17 more deaths in January than the 153 deaths that you previously reported. When you add the 17 deaths to the 153 the total becomes 170. You were able to obtain and review the three records that were previously unavailable. You were also able to review all 17 of the records corresponding to the additional 17 deaths. When the three records that were previously unavailable are added to the 17, you would now add that 20, to the 170, for a total of 190. Update the previous totals for January by typing in the additional number of ME deaths that also occurred in January and records that you also reviewed in January (see Figure 8-6).

For the Month of...	Total ME Deaths		Records Directly Reviewed		Comments
	Total Entered In Prior Sessions	Additions To Prior Total	Total Entered In Prior Sessions	Additions To Prior Total	
	January 2003	153	17	150	

Figure 8-6 Medical Examiner Activity Report w/Updated Totals

To save your entries and update the totals for the month of January, scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click in the box next to the words, “By clicking this box and clicking on the [Save Activity Report] button below, I certify that the above numbers are correct.” Then, click on the button titled, *Save Activity Report*.

Once you save your totals, a confirmation screen will be displayed requiring you to review the data you have entered and confirm it (see Figure 8-7).

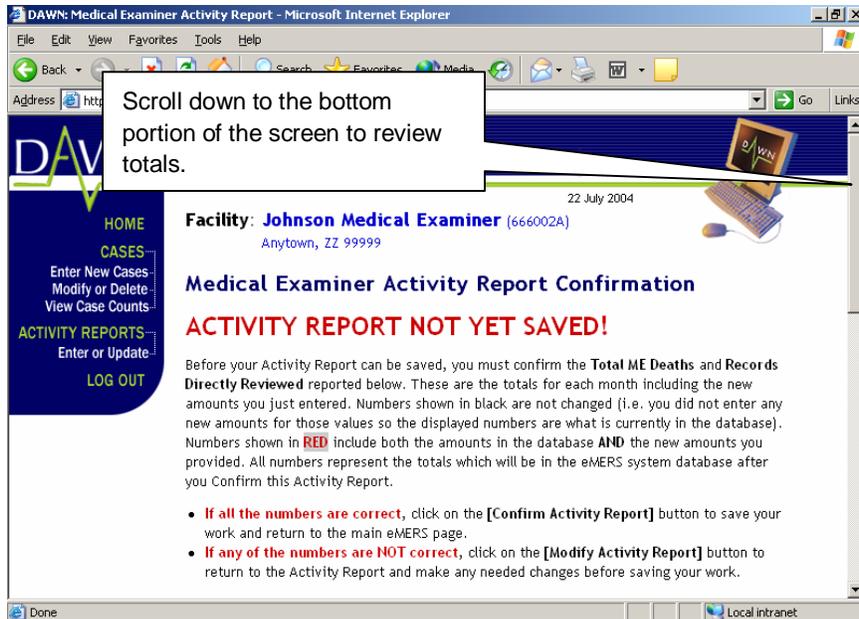


Figure 8-7 Medical Examiner Activity Report Confirmation Screen

Use the scroll bar to review the newly entered totals, appearing in red, for each month corresponding to a given year (see Figure 8-8).

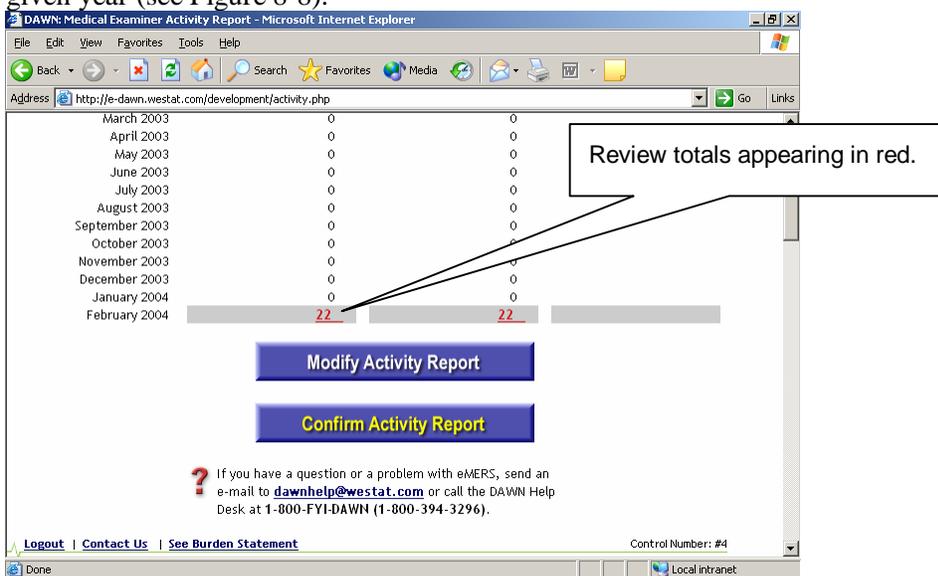


Figure 8-8 Newly Entered Totals Appearing in Red

Note that this page does not display prior amounts in one column and those just entered in another, but rather *total amounts*.

If after reviewing the totals you find that they are correct, click on the button titled, *Confirm Activity Report* to return you to the main eMERS screen.

If the totals are incorrect, click on the button titled, *Modify Activity Report*, to return to the previous Activity Report Screen and modify the totals as appropriate.

ME deaths and records reviewed that pertain to ME deaths occurring in February, would then be entered for February (see Figure 8-8), and subsequent months in the same manner. In the example in Figure 8-8, you determined that there were 225 ME deaths in February. But when you report the total number of February deaths, you have not yet had a chance to review any February visit records. Therefore, you have left the *Records Directly Reviewed* column blank for February.

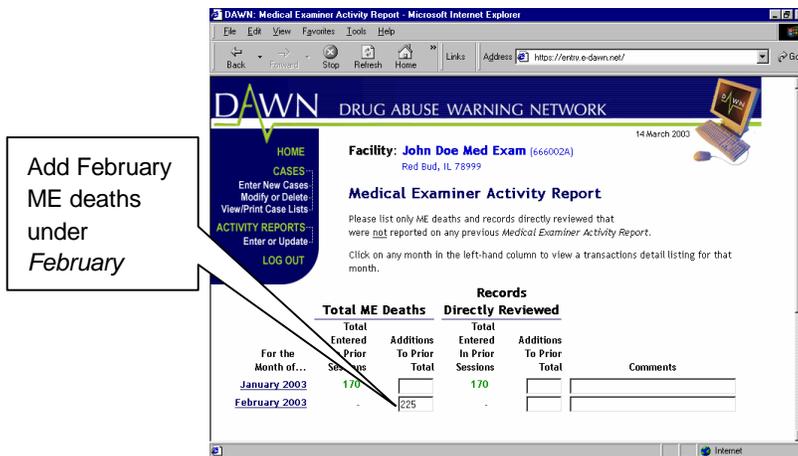


Figure 8-8 Add Deaths That Occurred in February Under *February*

When you want to add to your totals for a previously entered month, to reflect additional ME visits not previously reported or additional records reviewed, go to the main menu and under “Activity Reports,” select “Enter or Update.”

The screen will now display the totals you entered previously (see Figure 8-9).

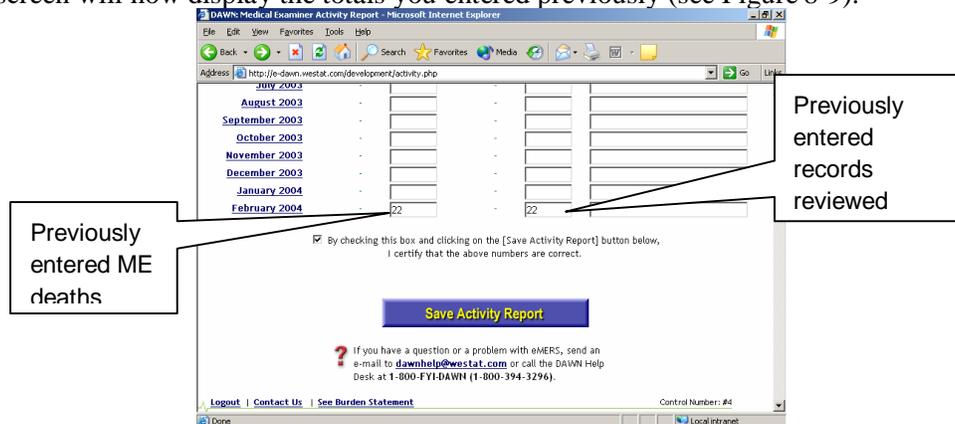


Figure 8-9 Medical Examiner Activity Report w/Previously Entered Totals for January

8.3 How to Review Previously Recorded Activity for a Specific Month

To review the previously recorded activity for a specific month, click on the month. This will display an Activity Reporting History screen for the selected month (see Figure 8-10).

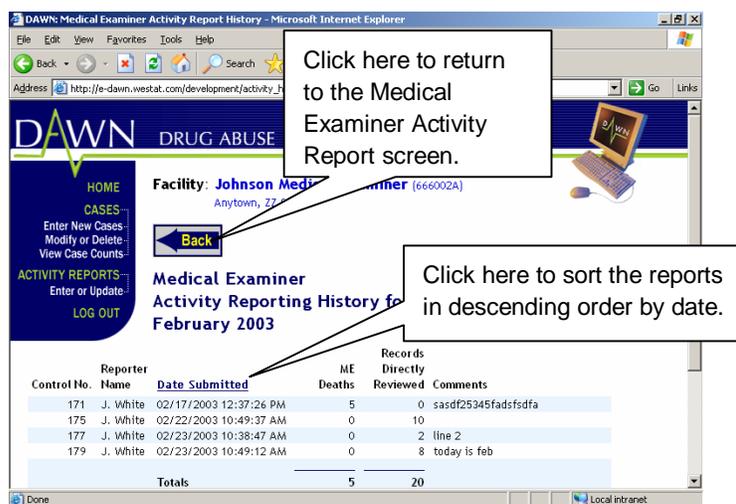


Figure 8-10 Reporting History Screen

Each row on this screen represents the initial or supplemental counts of ME deaths or records reviewed as previously entered into the Activity Report, for ME deaths occurring during the month displayed at the top of the list. This screen contains the following columns:

- *The Control No.* – The reference number used by eMERS and the DAWN Home Office Staff to keep track of each time you add counts of ME deaths or records received;
- *The Reporter Name* – The name of the Reporter who entered the information on the line;
- *The Date Submitted* – The date and time on which the reporter submitted the counts on the line;
- *ME deaths* – The initial (or supplemental) count of ME deaths entered into the Activity Report on the date submitted;
- *Records Directly Reviewed* – The initial (or supplemental) count of records reviewed by the reporter, as entered into the Activity Report on the date submitted; and
- *Comments* – Any comments that the reporter wrote pertaining to the counts entered on the date submitted.

The lines appear in ascending order by date submitted, with the cases submitted at the earliest date appearing first. To reverse the order in which the lines appear, click on the blue underlined words, *Date Submitted* (see Figure 8-10).

The totals of ME deaths and records reviewed appear below the last line. A useful feature of this Activity Report is that you do not have to wait until the end of the month to begin reporting numbers of deaths and records reviewed. If your office can provide visit counts and access to records more often, for example, weekly, and you want to report on a weekly basis, this system allows you to report counts for whatever periods you wish.

The two important points to remember are:

- **Enter counts of deaths and records reviewed on the line for the month in which the deaths occurred.**
- **Be careful not to double-count deaths or records reviewed, when you have multiple entries into the system for the same month.**

To return to the Medical Examiner Activity Report screen click on the *Back* button (see Figure 8-10).

9. How to Log Out

To log out of eMERS and return to the Log In screen, select *Log Out* from the menu in the corner of the screen (see Figure 9-1).



Figure 9-1 Menu in the Corner of eMERS